DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 353 532 CG 024 750

AUTHOR Bean, Reynold
TITLE Positive Risks, Challenges & Other Paths to Success: Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-56071-070-5
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 175p.; For related guides, see CG 024 748-751.
AVAILABLE FROM ETR Associates, P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830 (Title #557-H8, $19.95).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Teaching Guides (For Teacher) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Elementary School Students; *Individual Power; Middle Schools; *Self Esteem; *Success; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS Middle School Students; *Student Empowerment

ABSTRACT

This book examines sources of disempowerment in classrooms and schools and suggests ways to deal with them. This book shows how to build children's feelings of competence, control and influence by understanding and increasing their self-esteem. Chapter 1 looks at the barriers to overcome in empowering children. It examines how numerous forces at work in the schools, many of the traditional, time-honored practices, actually disempower children and make it more difficult for them to succeed. Chapter 2 examines some of the principles that underlie success in school. The self-esteem model this book is based on is described in Chapter 3. This chapter provides a theoretical grounding in self-esteem principles that will enhance understanding of what follows. Chapter 4 examines the link between empowerment and self-esteem. Chapter 5 describes specific practices and strategies to build children's feelings of control and competence. Chapter 6 presents a number of teacher-tested classroom activities that enhance children's feelings of power. Chapter 7 deals with specific issues of standards and expectations and how these affect children's performance and belief in themselves. Finally, for administrators and school boards, Chapters 8 and 9 describe concrete ways in which administrative practices and school and district policies can empower teachers and children and support them in developing the capacity to take risks and accept challenges. The appendixes offer checklists and lists of techniques relating to building self-esteem. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED353532

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Reynold Bean

Positive Risks, Challenges & Other Paths to *Success*

Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
S. Bignell
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ETR ASSOCIATES

CG024750

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

$19.95

Positive Risks, Challenges & Other Paths to *Success*

About the Author

Reynold Bean, EdM, has been a teacher, school administrator, therapist, educational consultant and school board member and has managed counseling agencies and residential treatment facilities for at-risk teens. He has conducted workshops on self-esteem throughout the United States for many years.

With Harris Clemes, he developed and published a model for self-esteem in 1976. *The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem: A New Approach for Elementary and Middle Schools* (ETR Associates, 1991) presents this model and is the parent book of a four-book series:

Cooperation, Social Responsibility and Other Skills
Individuality, Self-Expression and Other Keys to Creativity
Positive Risks, Challenges and Other Paths to Success
Honesty, Perseverance and Other Virtues

This series of books shows how the principles of each condition can be applied throughout elementary and middle school programs to improve the learning environment.

Bean has authored or coauthored many other books having to do with children, self-esteem and education, including *Elementary Principal's Handbook: New Approaches to Administrative Action* (Parker Publishing); *Self-Esteem: The Key to Your Child's Well-Being* (G. P. Putnam); *How to Be a Slightly Better Parent, How to Help Your Child Succeed in School, How to Raise Children's Self-Esteem, How to Raise Teenagers' Self-Esteem, How to Teach Children Responsibility, How to Discipline Children without Feeling Guilty* and *How to Develop Your Children's Creativity* (Price, Stern, & Sloan).

Positive Risks, Challenges & Other Paths to *Success*

Using the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

Reynold Bean, EdM

ETR Associates
Santa Cruz, California
1992

ETR Associates (Education, Training and Research) is a nonprofit organization committed to fostering the health, well-being and cultural diversity of individuals, families, schools and communities. The publishing program of ETR Associates provides books and materials that empower young people and adults with the skills to make positive health choices. We invite health professionals to learn more about our high-quality resources and our training and research programs by contacting us at P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830.

©1992 by ETR Associates. All rights reserved.

Published by ETR Associates, P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, California 95061-1830
Printed in the United States of America
Designed by Ann Smiley
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Title No. 557

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Bean, Reynold, 1935–
Positive risks, challenges & other paths to success : using the four conditions of self-esteem in elementary and middle schools / Reynold Bean.
p. cm.
ISBN 1-56071-070-5
1. Motivation in education—United States. 2. Self-esteem in children—United States. 3. Classroom management—United States. 4. School environment—United States. I. Title. II. Title: Positive risks, challenges, and other paths to success.
LB1065.B385 1992
370.15'4—dc20 92-19096

Contents

Preface ix

Introduction 1
- Why Can't Schools Do Better? 2
- When Schools Become Victims 4
- The Importance of Power 6
- What This Book Is About 7
- Schools, Children, Power and Success 8

Chapter 1: How Schools Disempower Children 11
- The Hierarchical Structure of Schools 12
- Powerless Teachers Can't Empower Children 13
- Decision Making: A Basic Power Skill 17
- Power and Responsibility: The Connection 20
- The Pivotal Role of Discipline 22
- Competition Ensures Failure 24
- The Highs and Lows of Standards and Expectations 26

Chapter 2: Aspiration, Ability and Effort: Three Powerful Motivators 31
- Aspiration, Ability, and Effort 32
- When Effort Makes a Difference 33
- When Children Take Responsibility 35
- The Self-Esteem Bridge 36
- The Fear and Anxiety Factor 38
- Goals Children Can Aspire To 40
- Negative Risks and Challenges 42

Chapter 3: The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem: A Model 45
- General Self-Esteem Principles 46
- The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem 47
  - *The Sense of Power* 48
  - *The Sense of Connectiveness* 51
  - *The Sense of Uniqueness* 52
  - *The Sense of Models* 54
- The Three Arenas of Self-Esteem 56
  - *The Personal Arena* 57
  - *The Interpersonal Arena* 58
  - *The Group Arena* 59
- Review 61

Chapter 4: Power and Self-Esteem 63
    The Intention to Act 64
    Characteristics of High Power Children 66
        Persistence 66
        Willingness to Take Risks and Accept Challenges 67
        Diligence 67
        Decisiveness 68
        Presumption of Success 69
        Assertiveness 70
        Presumption of Control 71
        Expression of Competence 72
        Practicality 72

Chapter 5: Building an Empowering Environment 75
    Use Questions Instead of Statements 76
    Ask Children What They Need 77
    Allow Children to Make Decisions 79
    Require 100 Percent on Papers 83
    Affix Responsibility 86
    Ask for Finished Products 88
    Assign Hand and Body Activities 90
    Give Plenty of Feedback 93
    Ensure Effective Discipline 95

Chapter 6: Classroom Activities and Vocational Preparation ... 99
    Classroom Activities 100
    Vocational Preparation 105

Chapter 7: Standards and Expectations: A Special Issue 109
    Self-Expectations 110
    Teacher Expectations 111
    Peer Expectations 114
    Parent Expectations 115

Chapter 8: To the Administrator: Empowering Your School 119
    Inspiring Teachers to Aspire 120
    Evaluations That Measure Goals 121
    Discipline 124
    Collegiality 126
    Pay Attention to the Curriculum 129
    Programs That Empower Children 130
    Programs That Empower Parents 133

Chapter 9: To the School Board: Building Aspiration in Your District 137
The Empowerment Dilemma 138
Empowering Top Administrators 140
Balancing the Decision-Making Process 142
The Ethic of Inclusion 144

Appendix A: Personal Arena Behavior Checklists 147
Appendix B: Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Self-Esteem 152
Appendix C: Group Arena Techniques for Building Self-Esteem 157

Preface

Question: How do children say, in their own terms, "I can't make the effort to do what you're asking, because I'm afraid I will fail if I do"?

Answers:

"I don't care!"
"This is stupid."
"I don't want to!"
"I can't."
"You can't make me do it!"
"You're always picking on me."
"It's not fair."
"We did this last year and I don't want to do it again."
"Leave me alone!"
"I don't feel good."
"My mother didn't wake me up in time to finish it."
"I'm busy doing something else."
"Joey's making too much noise and I can't work."

The list goes on and on. I'm sure any classroom teacher has additions to it. We call these statements "excuses" and assume the children making them are lazy and are trying to avoid work. The more fundamental truth is that they're trying to avoid *failure*.

Children learn early that the way to avoid failure is not to try in the first place. If you don't try, you can't be held accountable for the results.

The premise of this book is that avoiding the risk of failure is often a stronger motive than accepting the challenge of success. Children who avoid taking risks and accepting challenges in school do so because of several factors:

- The schools cannot overcome the children's backgrounds, which seem to limit their ability to be successful in school.
- The schools undermine the children's ability to become empowered to seek risks and challenges in their education.
- The children come to school with emotional handicaps, if not socioeconomic ones, resulting in feelings of powerlessness with respect to school success.

All of these result in children feeling that real success and satisfaction in school is not possible for them. These feelings permeate their attitudes and control their behavior, and gradually affect the overall climate of the school so that children's chances of success are minimal.

Children who do succeed in school, especially despite poverty, ethnicity, gender, handicaps and dysfunctional families, are characterized by their willingness to take risks and accept challenges. Feelings are at the core of this ability to do the things that result in school success. We are in the arena of children's self-esteem.

This book is one of a series showing how self-esteem principles can be used to create powerful themes in school programs. These themes can influence every aspect of a program, including the curriculum—what's taught and how it's taught. This series of books is based on the belief that there are a variety of ways to achieve excellence in education, but *any path to excellence will be based on concrete methods that enhance children's self-esteem.*

The unique contribution of these books is to show how an important educational theme can be aligned with self-esteem enhancement to have a powerful impact on children. The theory of self-esteem underlying all the material is described in detail in *The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem,* the first book of the series.

Positive Risks, Challenges and Other Paths to Success explores one of the most important factors in children's self-esteem, their Sense of Power. The Sense of Power is one of the four conditions of self-esteem reviewed here in Chapter 3. In brief, the Sense of Power is about children having the resources, capabilities and opportunities to influence the circumstances of their own lives at each stage of growth and development. It's about feeling competent and believing one will be successful in what one sets out to do. Children's Sense of Power determines whether they take risks, accept challenges, take responsibility and work hard, and whether they can fulfill their intention to be successful.

Learning is a risky business, especially in schools. At risk are children's feelings of self-worth and efficacy. It takes many successes to build strong and resilient self-esteem. It doesn't take many failures to undermine self-esteem, especially if it wasn't strong to start with.

Having to face what you don't know how to do, again and again, demands a strong inner self, one that many children don't seem to achieve in their home and personal lives, in their communities and neighborhoods. Many come to school unconsciously hoping to find that inner self there.

Children with a low Sense of Power are everywhere. They are not only the offspring of the poor and the disempowered who are increasingly filling the urban areas of the country. They are not only the rural poor who are a major disempowered group in our country. They are not only the handicapped. They are not only girls. They are not only children from "broken homes."

Children who have a low Sense of Power come from every level and condition. If a child is poor, from a single-parent home in which education has been minimal, or has experienced some form of economic, social, drug, physical, or sexual abuse, that child is more likely to feel powerless. But there are children in all of our schools who find a way to say, "I can't make the effort to do what you're asking, because I'm afraid I'll fail if I do!"

This book is about how teachers, administrators and school boards might help these children. In this book you will see how the empowering of children can best be done by teachers who themselves feel empowered to use their skills and talents. Teachers become empowered by working in schools that are committed to systematically helping teachers become so. Those schools become citadels that empower *both* teachers and children as administrators and school boards delegate control and responsibility downward in the hierarchy.

This book provides explicit, practical ideas and activities that can help every level of the school district to act in ways that finally empower children. No level and function within any district can flourish without the active, supportive behavior of every other level and function. The Sense of Power is about deciding to make something happen, and then being able to do what's needed to follow through. The same principle applies to all levels of district operations, from policy making to classroom practice.

During the course of a long learning career, I have had the good fortune to have studied with many teachers who made special contributions to my education. I tried to pick a few for special acknowledgment for this book, but couldn't. So I am left with trying to understand what these special teachers, starting as far back as elementary school and continuing to today, have in common.

It's really quite simple: They presumed that I was capable, if I made the effort, of producing work at the cutting edge of my capabilities, even when *I* doubted my ability to do so. As a result, a no more than average student was pushed into taking intellectual risks and pursuing ideas that might otherwise have remained unexplored. As only great teachers do, they collectively inspired me to aspire to do my best work. This book is one of the fruits of their labors.

Kay Clark at ETR Associates is an editor who has many of the attributes of a great teacher. She, like many of my previous mentors, inspired me to do this book when I doubted that I could. She supported, unflinchingly, some of its more passionate conclusions.

Finally, the following teachers from the San Francisco Unified School District contributed many of the specific ideas in Chapter 6: Mary Amerata, Sandy Berger, Sophrona Brown-Bess, Ellen Champlin, Betty Chapuzo, Wendy Elkin, Ann Henry, Sondra Wetzel Orsolini, Marjorie Talbot and Paul Zomchek. These teachers' contributions were solicited because they are all especially good at empowering the children in their classes.

Introduction

There are awesome problems facing American education. Some estimates place the number of at-risk children at 25 percent of the student population. Inner-city schools have daunting problems associated with poverty, immigrants, drugs and delinquency. All schools have growing numbers of children who require special programs.

The problematic children who fill the statistical charts are only the front line for even greater numbers who are performing marginally in school, whose capabilities are not stimulated by the schools. How many children are capable of doing more work at higher standards than they're actually doing? How many children are excited by their schools and fully engaged in them? There are few schools in the country that can't improve. One characteristic of the best schools is the continuing effort of their staff to do better. But if even the best schools could do better, what's going on in the others?

Why Can't Schools Do Better?

Critics of education keep asking why the schools can't do better. What is it that makes so much of American education lethargic when it comes to change? Why do even the best schools and teachers feel they aren't doing as well as they could? What will it take to improve the situation?

The easy answers are the "big" answers: more funds, more resources, smaller classes, better administration, more active public support. This may be true, but there's no good way to tell for sure how much of these things are needed, since there will never be enough of any of them to satisfy everyone. How many resources are enough? How much money is enough? How much public support?

There is a myth current in some quarters that at some time in the past, the schools were doing a great job, and then something happened. But when it happened and what it was aren't really clear. In truth, it's not clear that the schools have *ever* done a good enough job of educating children.

There have always been children who never got a fair shake in school. Females, minorities, rural populations and the poor have been systematically excluded from getting good educations through most of our country's history. It has only been in recent times that educators and some segments of the public have begun to insist that everyone get a better deal, and many places still have great inequity.

Public schools have never been truly outstanding places of learning, if one considers the broad spectrum of educational needs in the country. Children with physical, intellectual and emotional handicaps have only recently begun to have equity in receiving education. And in many places these children are still not getting what they need to become productive adults.

Since 1954 the courts have been filled with cases based on the desire to equalize educational opportunities for everyone who uses the public schools. Wouldn't it be wonderful if achieving equality of educational opportunity would lead to every child receiving a truly high quality education? But even where equity exists, children's education is still often lacking in quality.

If schools in the past were performing at levels acceptable to their communities, or at least well enough so that people weren't so critical of them, have greater demands by a more diverse student population simply uncovered weaknesses that were always latent? Are schools consistently doing more or less the same thing, albeit with larger and more diverse populations?

There is a way for schools to *appear* to be doing a better job. First, exclude children with special needs that cost more in time or resources to meet. Second, don't allow significant minorities (women, African Americans, Latinos, etc.) to believe that schools are there to serve them, and they won't make demands on the system. Third, make other institutions in society, such as families, churches, and communities, strong enough to exercise a dominant influence on children's lives so that expectations of what schools are to do are reduced. Fourth, create good economic conditions so that everyone can readily get a job, even school dropouts, and so that taxes aren't weighing people down so much that they're unwilling to give schools what they need. And, fifth, don't let teachers and others organize themselves to demand equitable pay and working conditions, because this would cost more than the community can afford.

Schools were thought to be doing a better job in the past because all of these conditions were fulfilled. They no longer are, and something that has always been present in our schools is now coming to the surface and showing how disabling and ineffective the system is. Children provide the evidence of it as they become disaffected with schooling in ever larger numbers.

The process of schooling has always disempowered children, but because of other social factors we've never had to notice it before. Some educators have known it right from the beginning—the processes by which children are empowered have never become widespread practices in most of our schools.

Schools actually ***undermine*** children's feelings of competence, control and efficacy unless the process is offset by empowering conditions in other areas of their lives. In the past it was primarily the family that did this. Families can't be depended on to do so nowadays since too many are themselves disempowered for social and economic reasons.

When Schools Become Victims

Schools can become victims, and school personnel may collectively begin to act as if they are victims. Becoming a victim is really quite a simple process, whether it occurs in individuals, institutions or groups.

People become "victims" when they feel that they don't have control over or influence on the important circumstances of their lives or work. They believe others or other forces do. Victims think that nothing can be done in the face of the power of the other, and so blame those forces over which they have no control for making life miserable. Victims do not believe they themselves are responsible or accountable for what they do or don't do. Victims wait until those with power exercise it, hoping they'll benefit from the results although they rarely expect to.

In the current climate of criticism of education, many school personnel are feeling like victims, controlled by forces over which they have no influence. Schools are expected to perform tasks far beyond the resources they have been given. The growing problems associated with children who have not been prepared to be successful in school limit the schools' ability to help children succeed. Schools become political and economic battlegrounds.

The result is that teachers in classrooms begin to feel they can't do their jobs as well as they want to. There isn't enough time or money to provide children with the attention or material resources they need. In this climate, teachers are inclined to do the best they can relative to their personal and professional resources. Children who can benefit from what these teachers do will be successful. Those who can't will fail in some way.

When schools and teachers are burdened by tasks they feel incapable of completing successfully, children are disabled. Sometimes the disability is clear and obvious, as when children compare their schools and their lives with those of others who are better off, leading them to believe that they're stuck in a life path from which there is no escape. Sometimes it is covert and subtle, as when children give up too quickly, believing that they don't have the ability to succeed at an academic task and that the prize isn't worth the effort anyway.

Growing numbers of children come to school feeling like victims. Poverty, prejudice, family disorganization and abuse have already lessened the ability of many children to see school as an arena for success and relief from suffering.

But there are even greater numbers of children who are not yet ready to give up hope. They come to school with some degree of optimism and readiness to learn, even though they may be deficient in the skills that would lead to success. They still consider school an important factor in their personal and vocational development. But if the school and its personnel feel victimized by wider social and economic forces, even the hopeful children don't get what they need. What they need is something special, something adults will have to work hard to provide, something adults themselves must feel in order to pass it on to children. Children need to believe in their own power to achieve.

The Importance of Power

Power is a popular word. It has become filled with many meanings as people throughout the world try to achieve control over their own lives, or at least wrest control from institutions which have proved ineffective. Everyone seems to be up in arms about something! That alone is evidence of the degree to which people in every area of society feel powerless over something they believe is important.

In this book we will often use words associated with power in some manner: *power, powerlessness, empower, empowerment,* and in particular the self-esteem condition *the Sense of Power.* Children who feel powerless are not able to be successful in school. It doesn't make much difference whether such feelings arise from economic or emotional disabilities. In children the result is the same—the feeling that even if they tried harder they are not likely to be successful at what they are asked to do.

Family, church and community were once the most important instruments for encouraging children to believe they could do something special with their lives. Even among the disempowered—people disenfranchised from the political and economic power sources in society—these fundamental institutions were important in making childhood a cradle of opportunity.

More recently, families, churches and communities have broken down; they no longer serve children as well. The combination of internal emotional processes and external social factors work together to make children feel powerless in profound ways. The culture of powerlessness grows. It influences what goes on in schools to further disempower children.

What This Book Is About

This book is about turning the process around so that children can become empowered in school. It examines the sources of disempowerment in classrooms and schools and suggests ways to deal with them. This book shows how to build children's feelings of competence, control and influence by understanding and increasing their self-esteem.

We must encourage, develop, require and expect children to take risks and accept challenges in their own education if our schools are to develop a population that can face the challenges of the coming century. This book is relevant to at-risk children in inner-city urban schools as well as to children in suburban settings. It is about something often overlooked in our criticism of American education: We have to engage children as partners in the renewal of the schools.

Children become partners in educational renewal through feeling that they are able to influence the conditions of their own learning. They don't have to have policy-making authority, but they do have to see their classrooms and schools as arenas where they can be successful, so that they will *want* to be there. Building self-esteem is the basis for such a feeling, and it can happen in every aspect of the school's programs.

Chapter 1 looks at the barriers to overcome in empowering children. It examines how numerous forces at work in the schools, many of them traditional, time-honored practices, actually disempower children and make it more difficult for them to succeed. Chapter 2 examines some of the principles that underlie success in school. It looks closely at some of the key issues associated with children's performance, in particular the relationship between aspiration and effort, and presents ways to strengthen children's belief in their own efficacy and ability.

The self-esteem model this book is based on is described in Chapter 3. This chapter provides a theoretical grounding in self-esteem principles that will enhance your understanding of what follows. Chapter 4 examines the link between empowerment and self-esteem. It discusses the characteristics that lead to success in school and looks at ways to develop these attributes in children with low self-esteem. Chapter 5 describes specific practices and strategies to build a classroom environment that will empower children and build their feelings of control and competence.

Chapter 6 presents a number of teacher-tested classroom activities that enhance children's feeling of power. These ideas were contributed specifically for this book; teachers will be able to adjust them to fit their own particular classes. Chapter 7 deals with the special issue of standards and expectations and how these affect children's performance and belief in themselves.

Finally, for administrators and school boards, Chapters 8 and 9 describe concrete ways in which administrative practices and school and district policies can empower teachers and children and support them in developing the capacity to take risks and accept challenges.

Schools, Children, Power and Success

Children who are successful in school have learned to take responsibility for their own learning. Either they come from families where such skills are absorbed through a combination of expectations, modeling and learning skills, or they have learned in school to be successful, from teachers who taught them how. Taking responsibility for one's own education is both the sign of empowerment and the pathway to it.

One of the most important ingredients of responsibility is the willingness to take risks and to accept challenges. Schooling requires these two attributes because the opportunity for failure is so prevalent. Learning is a tricky business; there's always someone around who seems smarter.

Adults, even if they are teachers, tend to forget how anxiety-provoking learning is. Children are asked to operate on the cutting edge of what they know. Then, when they know something well, they are asked to work on something they don't know at all. Success is ephemeral in the face of so many new challenges.

It is tragic to see how often in the early grades children sort themselves out as to who can expect to be successful. Children who come from families and groups who feel powerless are more likely to count themselves out very early in their educational careers unless teachers and schools persistently work to keep this from happening.

We often think that empowering children means building their competence over a broad range of academic areas. We forget that building children's competence presupposes their belief in their capacity to learn and their willingness to make the effort to do so. Competence and empowerment have a complex relationship with each other. It's a chicken and egg problem. But the entrance to the issue involves children's willingness to take risks and accept challenges in learning. Nothing significant can happen without that willingness.

Children need to feel empowered. They have to feel that they can take responsibility for their own lives and learning, ultimately becoming architects of their own destinies. While this may sound pretentious—a noble but unreachable goal—no other service a school may provide is as meaningful.

Chapter

1

How Schools Disempower Children

Empowering children so they become willing to accept the risks and challenges of schooling has become essential. With so many children coming to school unprepared for the demands they face, the job of schools and teachers is no longer the traditional one of teaching basic skills. Schools must now begin to *prepare* vast numbers of children to learn the basic skills, let alone the higher-order ones required for success in the modern world. The way schools have been organized and managed for many years does not make this an easy task.

The chief goal of schooling should be to help children overcome the disempowering influences that gender, ethnicity, family dysfunction, poverty and abuse may impose for reasons having nothing to do with schools or the children themselves. The primary function of schools should be to empower children.

This is a very different approach to education; it goes beyond what we have characteristically thought teaching should entail. We have the models of excellent teachers to show it can be done; it needn't be a mystery. But too many systemic and institutional factors keep the influence of individual teachers in check. There are factors at work that continually disempower children and teachers. These are what we need to look at now.

The Hierarchical Structure of Schools

The current organization of American schools is pretty much the same as it was in colonial times, except that state and federal layers have been added. There was always a general sense that power derived from above, so schools were arranged that way too. The American Revolution was one of the first challenges to that notion, but the results never quite hit the schools.

Every study of effective schools and programs shows that the closer decision making gets to the people who are going to be affected by it, the better things will be. Staff development programs work better if teachers help design them; substance abuse programs work better if youth are actively engaged in the design and implementation.

School-based decision making is central to every curricular program that seems to make a difference. And yet the essential structure of most school systems remains hierarchical and bureaucratic—school boards and administrators at the top, kids at the bottom. We give lots of authority to the people at the top. The wise ones push it off onto the people at the bottom.

It is not the structure of American education that disempowers teachers and children. It's the way that structure is used. There *are* school districts managed by insightful boards and administrators who use their power and authority creatively to empower those at the lower end of the hierarchy. The benefits of this approach are usually evident in the results they obtain in their districts, in terms of both productivity and morale.

Hierarchy is seductive. It appeals to the worst in people, both those who seek power for personal reasons and those who are chronic victims. The former can find ways to exercise control by disempowering others; the latter can blame the "system" for their feelings of disempowerment. Consequently, little can change at the classroom level, since the key to improvement is the empowerment of children. Empowering those at the bottom is hard to do in an atmosphere in which authority is constantly directed upward.

The solution to this problem is not to tear down the present educational system but to rethink how that system is used and what the role of leadership in education is and to find ways to distribute authority to those most affected by decisions.

Both teachers and children can make good decisions when three conditions are met:

1. They have the opportunity to make decisions that are important to them.
2. They have the capability—the skills and talents—to carry out those decisions.
3. They have the resources necessary to effect the decisions that influence their own performance.

A program that empowers children will delegate authority appropriately to them so they can feel like partners in their own education.

Powerless Teachers Can't Empower Children

One thing that keeps education from empowering children is that many teachers feel relatively powerless in their own classrooms. It's hard for adults who feel disempowered to empower others, whether those adults are parents or teachers.

Differentiation among teachers with respect to how well they teach is often obscured by poor performance appraisal practices, the adversarial nature of collective bargaining, and employment practices that place constraints on discipline and corrective action. Some teachers appear to do an exemplary job, while others don't. But all teachers suffer from practices that limit their ability to perform at consistently high levels.

Some of the sources of teachers' powerlessness are built into the system. Authoritarian school organizations keep teachers from influencing decisions that affect the conditions of their work, including how resources will be used to help them do a better job.

Lack of imagination as well as insufficient funding limit training and retraining opportunities, often leaving it to the individual teacher to find classes that may help improve his or her teaching practices. Sometimes school districts provide training that is not even relevant to what teachers need, because the teachers had no input.

New teachers are given the same responsibilities as those who have been teaching for years, often with little help in learning the practical realities of classroom management. It is no surprise that many potentially good teachers leave the profession soon after the daunting experience of first- and second-year traumas.

Teachers who have been taught normative practices that work with a general population of healthy children find themselves in classrooms with multiple-problem, at-risk children for whom they have had no preparation. It's no wonder they would like these children to be sent to other schools or to special classes. Unless they receive additional training and support, few teachers want to teach children they don't understand. The children get blamed for deficiencies they're not responsible for, by frustrated and powerless teachers who don't know what to do with them. School boards, administrators and the public expect teachers to handle everything, conveniently denying that children might need something more than what the classroom teacher can give.

Nor is effective and inspiring instructional leadership spread evenly or widely through administrative ranks. Teachers who doubt their own capabilities often feel that their administrators are not much help to them. It is frightening to need guidance and leadership and not be able to find it within your own school. Teachers feel powerless and overlooked when they work for administrators who can't help them improve their methods.

Many other sources within the system make teachers feel powerless as well. And there are personal factors—self-esteem, emotional problems and interpersonal relations within teaching staffs—that also influence whether teachers feel able to cope with the classroom. These are things that noneducators often do not consider, although they may be significant factors in a school's effectiveness.

The personal qualities and situations of teachers have never been the basis for analyzing teaching effectiveness. It's a good thing, too, that they haven't been made part of the bureaucratic processes of hiring, evaluation and retention. The system can't handle issues that are so sensitive and idiosyncratic.

But the fact remains that personal qualities are a dominant factor in the effectiveness of teachers. Teaching is a personal affair. The profession of education is no different from others in that it employs many different kinds of people with broad ranges of qualities and abilities. The difference between teaching and most other professions is that these personal qualities have a significant influence on what happens for children in the classroom.

Some teachers have low self-esteem, and their feelings of incompetence compromise their ability to make children feel safe and secure. Some teachers exercise control in ways that reflect their childhood disabilities and have endless confrontations over power with the children in their classrooms. Some teachers would rather be doing something else, and their distaste for the classroom is transmitted to the children, who cannot benefit if their teacher doesn't want to be there.

All the ways that one can come to feel powerless in one's life are factors for teachers also. Being a teacher does not confer immunity from childhood abuse or disabilities or losses, nor insulation from all the other stresses of life that undermine job performance. When teachers who feel powerless come up against children who feel powerless, the results can be disastrous!

The growing intensity of problems that children bring to school requires teachers who are sure of themselves, teachers who have enough emotional strength to be sensitive to what children need. At-risk children test the best teachers to their limits. Teachers who feel powerless—for whatever reasons—aren't able to cope well with these children. The result is that many children come to feel even more powerless.

It cannot be left to the initiative of individual teachers to renew education through self-empowerment, although such individual action should not be disregarded. When the way schools are organized is the source of disempowerment, things will change only when all levels of a school district are working together. The best schools and the best districts consistently demonstrate this. Dealing with the issues raised in this section will require teachers, administrators and school boards to do the following:

- Develop administrative practices, such as site-based decision making, that engage all relevant parties in setting policy.
- Develop networks within schools and districts that allow educators and others to create support systems for change.
- Allow individual teachers, while supporting each other,

to aggressively exercise the available initiatives to extend their control over their curriculum, instructional practices and programs.

- Know that nonteaching personnel—custodians, secretaries, clerks and bus drivers, for example—must become more energetic partners in school renewal efforts by being allowed to participate as well as by taking the initiative to do so.
- Realize that everyone, working together, must receive training and support in implementing new policies so that school staff can embrace change and believe in their ability to carry out school renewal.

Decision Making: A Basic Power Skill

There are two ways for children to become disempowered, even if they start off with adequate feelings of efficacy. One is to require them to make choices and decisions they cannot make successfully. The other is to keep them from making decisions and choices they *are* competent to make. Schools tend to do both of these things.

Empowerment is effected through conscious decision making. Control and influence are expressed through the act of deciding to do something and then carrying out that decision successfully. People who feel that they lack power, control or influence show it by their reluctance to act decisively. They don't make and carry out decisions in a timely fashion. They require others to make choices for them—"You decide, it's too confusing for me!"

Teaching practices are designed to implement curricular objectives which have often been determined far from the classroom. Children are expected to do what is asked of them.

And since so much is asked, they rarely have time for independent action.

The situation is quite the opposite when children are playing. They will then make long strings of choices and decisions, often quite complex ones with profound consequences. Since decision making is the key to feeling in control and competent, is it any wonder that so many children would rather play than do schoolwork?

Learning at school is a constantly shifting arena for decision making. Children who think about what is going on are liable to be asking themselves many of the following questions during the school day:

- "What should I do now?"
- "Where does this go?"
- "What will happen if I say or do this?"
- "How can I find out if this is the right answer?"
- "What did the teacher mean?"
- "Should I say something now?"
- "How can I get the teacher's attention?"
- "How should I react to that?"
- "What is the answer to that question?"

Children who are responsible partners of the teacher in the classroom answer these questions for themselves. They make these and many other decisions fairly independently. It only seems that children aren't taking responsibility because so many of the choices they make are never acknowledged. However, children who aren't sure of themselves, who doubt their capabilities, who have low self-esteem or who see themselves as incompetent are still required to make the same unacknowledged decisions as competent children.

Decision making is as basic to feeling empowered as reading is to overall school success. By turning decision making into a conscious process, referring to it frequently, and teaching children successful decision-making strategies, you can help them perform, raise their self-esteem, and support a fundamental life skill.

When children are expected to make decisions they don't feel they can make successfully, they do one of two things: They make bad decisions and deny responsibility—"I didn't know I was supposed to do it that way!"—or they avoid making decisions—"I forgot!" Either of these evasive strategies results in a diminished sense of efficacy. Children need high self-esteem in order to weather the decision-making challenge. There are few adults who don't remember an event in their own schooling when they were overwhelmed by a feeling of powerlessness. Some never recover from it.

On the other hand, when children aren't allowed to make the decisions they *are* capable of making, they also feel powerless—as if the world sees them as less competent than they really are. Schools contribute to this type of disempowerment in a number of ways:

- They disregard what children know by keeping them working on things they don't know.
- If it is not academically oriented, most of what children learn outside of school is not especially valued in school.
- If a child has found a different way of doing something, such as long division, but it isn't the way the teacher wants it done, the method is usually disparaged and the child is not permitted to use it.
- Children are told not only what to do but where, when and how to do it. Most decisions, except perhaps the decision to follow instructions closely, are taken from them. Even if they have a more satisfying way to do something, most teachers would rather they didn't use it.

Decision making is an individual act; it reflects one's independence and autonomy. But school is a situation where many of the needs of individuals must be subordinated to group cohesion and productivity. This often means that an individual child's choices will not be acted on, especially if the teacher believes that doing so would undermine the group's integrity. The skills needed to adjust and adapt to groups are quite useful in school and in life, but they are not the skills required for making decisions.

The goal is *not* to turn over fundamental decisions to children who aren't capable of making them. It is to increase the pressure to be concerned with good decisions, beginning in the earliest grades, so that as children become more independent they can take more responsibility for their own learning.

The idea that children need to be partners in educational renewal is not widespread. But it is the important link in understanding how to change schools. Far from being empty vessels into which adults pour learning, children are active mediators of what is being learned. Empowered children can learn to make good decisions that will support teachers' efforts. In succeeding chapters there are teacher-tested suggestions on how to allow, encourage, expect and require children to make decisions in the classroom.

Power and Responsibility: The Connection

How issues associated with responsibility are handled in schools contributes to teachers' and students' powerlessness. There are several ways this happens, ways that are traditional in most schools:

- Responsibility for achieving results is not accompanied by authority for determining how those results will be achieved. Teachers tend to follow methods decided on by publishers or curriculum experts, and children do what they're told.

- Children who haven't been taught responsibility at home are expected to be just as responsible as those who have. The result is, of course, that some children are automatically disadvantaged by factors having nothing to do with their innate ability to learn. Failure results for these children and it becomes part of their learning pattern quite early.
- Responsibility and decision making are interrelated processes. Thus, limits on decision making lower children's ability to take responsibility—even in areas where they're capable. One glaring example is that, except in cooperative learning classrooms, children are dissuaded from helping each other. They are to ask the teacher for help. This effectively puts the power for determining everyone's success into the teacher's hands and takes it away from children who are actually quite competent to help each other.
- Maintenance people, teachers, aides and parent volunteers limit the amount of responsibility children have for the care and maintenance of their learning environment. This is done for apparently sound reasons, such as freeing the children for learning tasks. But an important psychological issue is overlooked in the process. Commitment to something is almost always associated with responsibility for it. Children who are not held responsible for the cleanliness and order of classrooms and schools don't develop feelings of ownership and belonging. And, in the classroom, chores are usually limited and don't engage many children at any one time. Children's feelings of efficacy are enhanced when they see physi-

cal results of their efforts and are acknowledged and rewarded for them.

Criteria used by children to determine their efficacy are not the same as those used by adults. Children have a broad array of things that enable them to feel empowered, but these are not all relevant to the classroom. A narrow focus on academic proficiency keeps many children from feeling committed to and responsible for their classroom and school. Thus the process by which they could begin to feel empowered enough to begin to take risks and accept challenges in intellectual areas is aborted. An empowering classroom would provide them with many opportunities to take responsibility in ways they perceive to be useful and successful.

The Pivotal Role of Discipline

Classroom and schoolwide discipline procedures are generally viewed as instruments for maintaining order rather than devices for empowering children. It is no accident that highly effective schools and classrooms are also highly disciplined places. But that discipline usually is not exercised in authoritarian ways.

Instilling in children self-discipline—a set of internal controls on their own behavior—is the goal of many parents and teachers. Children who have self-discipline can size up situations and are able to do what they must in order to function successfully. And an important goal of school discipline is to encourage such self-discipline in children.

Unfortunately, authoritarian discipline is still practiced in most schools in one form or another. The growing number of at-risk children who don't have sufficiently strong internal controls encourages the critics of education to insist that more discipline is needed. Also, teachers who wish only to teach, not to police children, demand that administrators become tougher and more rigid.

Authoritarian discipline is not characterized simply by its arbitrariness; it has other features:

- Expectations, standards, rules and policies are determined by adults without engaging children in the process.
- A small group of adults are given the responsibility of imposing the rules, e.g., assistant principals, yard supervisors, hall monitors, security guards. In most instances this sets up an adversarial situation between children and adults and stimulates misbehavior in the most defiant youngsters.
- Discipline is characterized by prohibitions and punishments for infractions. The full range of *acceptable* behavior is not made clear, nor is there specific training in acceptable behavior for children who have poor internal controls. Children view discipline as a limitation on their behavior rather than a set of parameters within which they have choices.
- A full range of negative identities is encouraged by the discipline system. Children who cannot find positive roles for themselves within the academic realm find negative roles as troublemakers, "tough guys," behavior problems, and folk heroes for their less venturesome peers. The need to be special, to receive attention and be acknowledged as an individual, encourages some children to "take on" the system as a heroic and noble act.

Authoritarian discipline systems are rarely recognized as a cause of misbehavior. Because they severely limit children's active influence on their environment, they stimulate children to act out in order to feel less disempowered. Schools that use authoritarian discipline can always justify it by pointing to the need for control. Rarely do the adults see how much the system itself generates that very need.

To overcome the factors described in this section, the role of children in classroom and school discipline must be redefined. The new definition incorporates the following ideas:

- The goal of effective discipline is to promote internal controls, not external constraints.
- Children are capable of influencing the rules that govern them, if they have identified and experienced the benefits of a good environment for learning. Such an environment has many features that build self-esteem.
- Discipline is not something to be done to children. It is a process in which everyone must participate—children, teachers, nonteaching personnel and administrators.
- Children don't misbehave when they are actively engaged in learning experiences that satisfy their need to feel competent.

Competition Ensures Failure

The competitive atmosphere that characterizes many classrooms is an important source of disempowerment. Competition must, by its very nature, ensure that more children fail than succeed. For many children, failure is caused by disabilities that have little or nothing to do with schooling. Disabling family, physical, social and economic problems interfere with their ability to learn. Competition for limited rewards, including high grades, ensures that such children become school failures. The competitive climate is not fair; it is not a level playing field.

Children who are highly competitive because of personal style or family values tend to be quite successful in competitive academic environments. They expect to compete and win, so they do. They beat the odds again and again. The success of this small group blinds many educators to the reality that other children are giving up the race very early in their school careers. We wonder why they can't be like their successful peers. The answer is that the competitive situation itself keeps it from happening.

Educators are invariably people who themselves have been successful in the competitive climates of the schools they attended. Their having achieved enough academic success to become teachers is evidence of it. Is it any wonder that in their own classrooms they create the same climate in which they were successful, and support children who are most like them?

Children who give up competing because they see themselves persistently losing don't take risks and accept challenges. Some even choose failure and take pride in their distaste for and disaffection from school. Many others quietly extend only marginal effort, enough to get by. They believe that even if they really tried they wouldn't win in any case, so why try?

Raising children's self-esteem can help them cope with the disempowering aspects of competition. It is unlikely that all competition will be erased from schools, and this may be a good thing, given the competitiveness of life in our society. But children with higher self-esteem are more capable of handling competitive situations without excessive anxiety or resistance. In effect, they tilt the playing field more favorably for themselves despite any disabilities they may have. In addition, such children don't have to win to feel good. They can escape the either/or mentality where the only choices are to win at all costs or to drop out of the learning game altogether!

The Highs and Lows of Standards and Expectations

"Am I finished yet?" This question, so often asked by children, is only their form of the never-ending questions we all ask ourselves: What is expected of me? How is it communicated? How do I go about meeting those expectations?

Teachers want to know how they'll be evaluated and whether they're doing a good job with the children in their classes. Administrators want to know if their schools have accomplished the goals laid out in their school plans. We all want to know if we've done well enough.

Standards and expectations can be a great source of disempowerment. Yet they can also empower. The formula for this is quite simple: If you set standards and expectations substantially higher—or lower—than children are capable of achieving, they will feel disempowered. If standards and expectations are perceived by children as achievable, with effort, in a fair and supportive learning environment, they will feel empowered.

The process of seeking psychological closure is important in determining one's sense of efficacy. To complete a task successfully, we must know when we've finished. Some children don't have that sense, as many teachers know. They either stop too soon or they don't seem to feel confident that they've actually completed something. What we call standards and expectations are general guidelines that enable people to know when they've done enough, so that in the process of being judged by others, they can judge themselves.

It is obvious that when standards are set so high as to ensure failure for those who don't have the requisite information or skills to succeed, some children will feel powerless and frustrated. Because most teachers want children to succeed, they attempt to set standards and expectations at a level that will optimize that outcome. The method is to set some average standard that most children can meet. It's expected that some will meet it easily and others won't. Then some children finish a task very quickly, and it becomes a problem to challenge them. Others don't finish within the allotted time, and the problem is to keep them on task. Both ends of the spectrum cause difficulties.

There are classes designed for children with similar capabilities. Homogeneous grouping is controversial and has a number of problems associated with it. But so does heterogeneous grouping! It's one of those teaching dilemmas that never seems to get resolved.

A more subtle cause of disempowerment in American schools is that standards and expectations are set too low. This results in the same problem. Children wish to work to closure—"Am I finished yet?"—but in so doing don't realize the feeling of accomplishment that comes from seeing their own hard effort meet the mark. Children work only to the levels expected by their teachers. Effort adjusts to meet expectations. Few children demand more to do; they just become bored and distracted. They don't feel that school is a test of their real capabilities the way play or sports are.

Studies of effective schools and classrooms invariably demonstrate the importance of high standards and expectations, *combined with every device to help children meet them*. Of course standards and expectations can't be raised without giving children the resources and skills to meet them. But higher expectations have an energizing effect on children. Why do children stretch to meet higher standards, sometimes surprising even the adults who work with them? There are several reasons:

- Children seek closure as a way to feel satisfied. They will extend more effort when standards are higher, but reachable, in order to experience that closure.

- Higher standards, combined with a greater emphasis on mutual support and cooperation, stimulate an esprit de corps that encourages children to do better. Competitiveness keeps this from occurring.
- Teachers who work in an atmosphere where high standards and expectations are supported at every level (administration, board and community) feel they're doing something worthwhile; and the enthusiasm of teachers has a palpable effect on student performance. When teachers believe in what they're doing, they tend to believe in the children they're teaching, also.
- Higher standards and expectations in academic areas require that more time and emphasis be placed on these areas. When children spend more time on the basic academic skills, they improve. More important, ***they observe themselves improving through effort***. This ability to sense their own progress is perhaps the most motivating experience they can have in school. When standards are too low, the ability to see measurable progress is limited. To have confidence in their own efficacy, children must be able to sense the relationship between effort and results. They can only do this when they spend enough time at something, and receive continuing feedback about their progress.
- Higher standards and expectations pose challenges that stimulate children's natural drive toward competence. Children also take pride in a school they perceive as being a meaningful and important place. Bright children have an impact on the learning atmosphere of a classroom; the slower children often use them as a standard

> to measure themselves by. When the more successful children are engaged and enthusiastic, they tend to draw others into that feeling tone, *if the less successful children feel they too can meet the mark.* When more successful children are bored and distracted, it has an enervating effect on the whole class. When the teacher uses cooperative learning methods, where both faster and slower children are engaged in meaningful activities, the interest of the faster children in meeting higher standards influences everyone.

Raising standards and expectations for the purpose of challenging students to increase effort and improve performance is difficult. It includes forming new goals as well as designing processes for ensuring that everyone is given a chance to meet the new standards as much as possible. Teachers who feel competent (empowered) to meet the teaching challenge associated with those standards are crucial to this process.

American education has characteristically set standards at the level of the "average" child, overall. What has not been fully understood is the degree to which those standards cap the energy that children devote to learning tasks.

How we go about setting standards and inspiring children to meet them is a fundamental matter in teaching. In Chapter 7 the topic is addressed in further detail. At this juncture it is only touched on to round out the list of ways in which schools disempower children.

Establishing higher standards for children in our schools has not been done effectively because no one has recognized that the subject is so closely aligned with self-esteem. It is not a numbers game in which higher grades can be declared as a standard and everyone must jump up to them! You will read much in the next chapters that will enable you to understand the complexity of standards and expectations and prepare your classroom and school for raising them.

Chapter

2

Aspiration, Ability and Effort: Three Powerful Motivators

Americans have always been proud of their distinctive willingness to take risks and accept challenges. The country was formed by people who braved adversity, from early explorers through the founders who challenged the king, to the mountaineers, the cowboys and the pioneers. Our major cultural iconography is associated with people who took risks.

This comes into the lives of children through the real and mythic heroes and heroines they choose to emulate. One sign of a healthy child is that he or she has a firm but reasonable inclination to take risks. We often like and respect kids for their ability to take on tall trees or fences, or stand up for their rights against bigger kids.

Taking risks and accepting challenges is complex. We need to explore the elements that shape children's sense of their own power in order to understand why some children do accept the challenges of school and others don't. At the root of the willingness to accept challenges are the things children aspire to.

Aspiration, Ability and Effort

The motivating force behind risk-taking behavior is aspiration. This is the desire to be or do something special and important. Others may have done it before, but the aspirant feels that doing this special thing will bring him or her closer to an idealized self-image.

Aspiration happens only when children believe that what they aspire to is possible to achieve. Children who become victims have come to believe that aspiring to some important thing in life, such as success in school, is not an achievable objective.

Children will aspire to success if they believe at least one of two things about themselves: one, that they have the *ability*, the skills and personal attributes required, to be successful at any given task; the other, that they can achieve success if they make a hard enough *effort*, irrespective of innate ability. They judge themselves and each other according to these two standards. Younger children tend to believe effort wins out, older ones believe more in ability. Some younger children don't feel capable of making the effort, and many older children already believe they don't have the ability.

Both effort and ability are associated with children's feelings. Most children have distorted views of their real ability, judging it too low or too high. Perceived ability is the issue, not measurable ability. And the way children perceive their ability is conditioned by their feelings, their self-esteem, and often has little to do with how they are perceived by teachers.

Kids who feel that greater effort won't work or that they don't have the ability to do the work set before them won't aspire to school success. Thus the major task of the teacher in the classroom is to find ways to show that effort will reap rewards and that children have the ability to do what is required of them.

When Effort Makes a Difference

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." That phrase sums up the essentially American notion that fate does not rule our lives. Effort will make anything work, from getting the cap off a pickle jar to sending people to the moon. The phrase holds out hope that success is inevitable if you do the right thing and try hard enough.

Most of what we expect children to do in classrooms is based on the belief that effort wins out in the end. But belief in the efficacy of trying begs several important questions, among which are what should be tried, and when and how. In other words, the notion of "try, try again" presupposes that one has the right stuff with which to make the effort.

What they believe about the efficacy of effort is important to children as they make decisions from day to day about the role of schooling in their lives. Children who don't make an effort are the bane of classroom teachers. Schools with large numbers of children who have given up making an effort are places in which little learning goes on—even for those who do try.

Belief in effort is based on early experiences in the family. The essential experience is that a child has been able to fulfill his or her wishes by deciding to do so and by taking action. Successful experiences having to do with getting toys, mother's attention, comforting, safety, food and warmth build children's feelings of efficacy. In families where children have had to share resources with others, they may well have experienced "trying harder" and achieving the results they'd set out to accomplish, e.g., getting Dad's attention away from someone else.

The assumption that effort will produce better results arises from such early experiences. In their absence it is hard to inculcate such a belief by repeating the aphorism "Try, try again." In other words, children learn through their earliest experiences about the value of effort in their lives, and the learning is unconscious. Many come to school feeling that the results of making an effort are unpredictable; they have become young fatalists.

Children often discover that making an effort is a path to failure, at least in some aspects of life. For example, a child tries very hard to do schoolwork but is never able to be one of the really "bright" kids. On the other hand, the same child makes an effort on the basketball court and comes to be seen as one of the best players on the playground. We will try when we believe effort makes a difference. Aspiration follows. Children want to do things that lead to success, not things that lead to failure.

If children believe that their effort has a high likelihood of resulting in success, they will work very hard at a particular task—sometimes so hard as to astonish adults. But they won't exercise the same effort in another area of their lives if they believe that either failure or only marginal success is likely. You may find yourself saying things like, "If only you'd work as hard in class as you do on the basketball court, you'd do fine in school!" But the child already believes that this is not true.

Efficacy, the feeling a child has of being able to produce an intended result from any action, does not become a general attitude until the child has seen results from an action in several areas of his or her life. Children are demotivated by failure and they will avoid the things that result in failure. They are motivated by the feeling of efficacy, however they can achieve it, even if that feeling is the result of antisocial, deviant or delinquent behavior. They often look in other directions—delinquency, drugs, sex, gangs or other nonproductive outlets—if they can't achieve the feeling any other way.

An important goal of schooling is to broaden and deepen children's feelings of efficacy. This is more important in the long run than any particular skill that may be taught. Schools too often reduce children's feelings of efficacy and reinforce the belief that effort won't make a difference.

When Children Take Responsibility

Children who take personal responsibility for learning do better in school than those who don't. They work harder, and their teachers like them more and expect better things from them. They become leaders; they are given access to the rewards and opportunities available. Willingness to take responsibility and the feeling of efficacy are closely related. You can't have one without the other.

Children learn to take responsibility while developing a feeling of efficacy in their homes and schools. They learn responsibility as they do chores, abide by rules, are taught useful skills and are held accountable for their own performance and behavior in fair and equitable ways.

Not all children come to school with the same ability to take personal responsibility. For example, some kindergartners can take off their boots and jackets and put them in the right place without being supervised; others can't. Some students pay close attention to the teacher and follow directions. Others don't.

Parents vary in effectiveness as they teach personal responsibility to their children. Teachers know that some children will have to be supervised closely and taught repeatedly before they learn the responsible behaviors required to maintain group cohesion and promote a learning climate in the classroom. Some children already have the needed skills.

Children take responsibility more readily when they believe they'll be successful in carrying out tasks. They tend to avoid responsibility if they feel they will be criticized or penalized. Building children's feelings of efficacy and their ability to take responsibility are fundamental to creating a classroom climate where children continually work toward high standards.

To do that, teachers must understand the close connection between aspiration, efficacy and personal responsibility. Without these, children cannot do well in school or develop optimism about their future prospects. These qualities can be nurtured in classrooms, even when family and community life have not inculcated them, because children continue to possess the capacity for aspiring, being effective and taking personal responsibility. Many of them just don't exercise these qualities in school!

Having the capacity for aspiring, being effective and taking personal responsibility does not always result in demonstrating those qualities, however. There are many children whose lives are so impoverished that the idea of a life better than the one they know is completely foreign to them.

The Self-Esteem Bridge

Believing that the potential for aspiration, efficacy and responsibility lies within all children becomes more than an act of faith when self-esteem is understood to be the variable that bridges potential and active expression. There are several keys to helping children give fuller expression to their potential qualities.

The key to aspiration is time. Children who seem to have low aspirations actually do aspire to things, but in the very short term. The need for immediate payoffs, an inability to defer emotional gratification, and a mistrust of people and events result in their feeling that success must be quick and measurable. Building children's self-esteem allows them to extend the time frame within which they feel safe enough to aspire. As self-esteem rises, presumption of success increases; children become capable of aspiring to things more distant in time. (This is best effected through enhancing the Sense of Power, which will be discussed in the next chapter.)

The key to efficacy is variation. All children are effective about something. To make people laugh, to inspire sympathy, to be manipulative, or simply to be able to do some simple, normative task competently—these are some of the ways children express their effectiveness, that is, the ability to influence the circumstances in which they find themselves.

New skills, even those that should have been learned long before, gradually build children's feelings of efficacy. Rather than giving failing grades to children who don't learn the skills we wish, schools should be finding skills that such children *will* learn. As self-esteem increases, the wish and the willingness to become more effective also grows. That is why highly competent people are always trying to learn new skills and create better methods.

The key to responsibility is benefits. Children tend to take responsibility more easily when they can see the benefits to themselves or to people who are important to them. Children who are in gangs, for example, take enormous responsibility for the physical welfare of their fellow members, those who provide them with the satisfaction of affiliation and the safety of mutual aid. Disaffected children need to believe that effort will result in something of benefit to them. This is why rewards play a major role raising the self-esteem of children who feel powerless.

Teachers should beware of relying on extrinsic rewards, however, because they are not useful for children who have higher self-esteem. As one's feeling of power rises, there is an intrinsic satisfaction in seeing the benefits of growth and success to self and others. And different children will reap different benefits from the same activity. Wise teachers spend a good deal of time discussing the short- and long-range benefits of school tasks, especially with children whose self-esteem is low.

It is fruitless, though, to have faith in children's ability to change and grow when the conditions for such growth are restricted. Many of these restrictions were discussed in the previous chapter. But there are also personal, emotional limitations that need to be addressed. Chief among these is the way fear and anxiety place limitations on children's willingness to aspire and to take responsibility.

The Fear and Anxiety Factor

Aspiration always produces a certain amount of fear and anxiety. To aspire to something is to wish for the realization of a goal. Whenever there is the possibility that something *may* happen, there is also the possibility that it may not. If what is aspired to is important, the thought that it may not happen results in some degree of fear and anxiety. Adults tend to disregard this factor when asking children to aspire, since maturity has taught us to contain the anxiety and translate it into action. Children have yet to learn that lesson.

Children behave as they do because of a complex balancing act between avoiding anxiety and seeking satisfaction. When fear and anxiety reach a certain level—different for different children—children become demotivated. Conversely, they are motivated by activities or events that produce satisfaction and good feelings. In terms of self-esteem, children are motivated to do things that enhance their self-esteem and demotivated to do things that undermine it.

Schoolwork has the potential for fear and anxiety built into it. When children take on a new task, there is always the possibility that they may not be able to complete it successfully. Children with higher self-esteem tend to disregard this anxiety because of their history of success in meeting challenges. Children with low self-esteem pay attention to their anxious and fearful feelings and, in many cases, anticipate that they will fail again.

Over time, children learn to avoid doing anything that produces too much fear and anxiety. Simultaneously they learn to do things that produce feelings of satisfaction. They pick and choose the experiences to which they devote themselves relative to the balance between these feelings. They will do things that make them anxious only if they believe they will win out in the end. This is one reason why children who make no effort in school will do things outside of school that to adults seem risky and dangerous.

There are two ways teachers can deal with this complex psychological issue. One is to reduce the degree to which children experience fear and anxiety in school. The other is to increase the number and quality of experiences that result in satisfaction and comfort for children. The two strategies are different. An example of reducing anxiety is explaining to children that a story they've written will only be acknowledged, not judged or graded. An example of increasing satisfaction is allowing children to work with their friends on a creative project.

Children who are not doing well in school or are at risk for failing carry fear and anxiety with them. They may not appear to do so; they may behave in ways that distract adults from recognizing this. Overtly aggressive behavior of disaffected students is often evidence that they're covering over their fear, keeping themselves, as well as others, from seeing it. Having children face their fears directly is a less effective strategy for teaching than removing the occasion for anxiety in the first place. Good teaching creates experiences in which children learn to manage the stresses that normally occur in learning. Success is the greatest antidote to fear and anxiety.

Goals Children Can Aspire To

There can be no aspiration without goals. When children aspire, they have goals; when they have goals, aspiration is present. When adults suggest or impose goals on children to which children do not aspire, confusing and stressful things occur. Usually conflict between adults and children results: "I want you to want to do this!" "I don't want to."

Goals are not only definitions of *what* children aspire to—they also imply that something is important. For children to have goals in school that they are willing to aspire to, the goals have to connect with something the children feel is important. In other words, children need to know *why* they're going after something, not simply what it is they're supposed to be going after.

Children's *whys* can be as complex as higher-order philosophical values—e.g., they may aspire to something because of their family's religious beliefs—or as simple as the need to feel the way they like to feel. But they must know why and believe that the why is important.

This poses problems for teachers and schools. The fundamental issue is whether school is presented to children as preparation for their futures or as an experience that has value in current time. As adults, we realize that both are necessary and relevant to children's education. Children may not feel the same way, however, especially if they don't have a strong presumption of success. If children are asked to aspire to goals that make no sense to them or that they believe are unreachable, they will have no feeling of responsibility toward those goals.

Schooling has to have immediate value for children, allowing them to feel that by making an effort to be successful, they will realize something they want. The alternative is to have the activities associated with schooling produce so much satisfaction for children that they want to participate avidly, regardless of where the schooling is leading. Fewer and fewer children take the importance of schooling on faith, because too many children come from families or circumstances in which the importance of schooling is hard to see.

During their school years, we expect children to make a natural transition from viewing school as a satisfying current experience to recognizing school as instrumental for success in life. In preschool, children aren't expected to be motivated by the far-off goals of vocation and academics. We want them to be happy and enjoy the experience, and to learn skills of group participation that will assist them later on. But by the time children reach middle school, we want them to think more about the future and the need to prepare for it.

Something happens, though, along the way. We lose some kids—many kids, if some observers are to be believed. The children who started in preschool as avid learners because it was fun and satisfying, arrive at the middle years unmotivated to make the transition to the notion of school as preparation. In fact, many drop out within the first few years of high school. These large numbers of children do not believe that school will lead them to a worthwhile place. How does this happen? What is the process by which we lose kids—even the ones who don't drop out physically but function only marginally until graduation frees them for "real" life?

Children who drop out have lost their feeling of efficacy in the school environment. At the same time they believe they lack the ability to be successful. They don't believe that the rewards of school success are available to them. Trying harder won't pay off, this ever larger group of young people believe. School is not the instrument through which their particular goals and aspirations will be realized.

Only a combination of school being emotionally satisfying at the same time as it is seen as having long-term value will keep more young people in school longer, at higher levels of success. Easy enough to say, but how is this to be achieved?

One way is to be sure that adults and children have their mutual goals aligned so that what teachers ask of students makes sense to both. Simultaneously, both adults and children must feel that school is enhancing their efficacy, enabling them to have more control over the circumstances of their lives and work.

We want children to have positive goals for which they will take responsibility. But sometimes children take risks and accept challenges that don't seem positive or productive. It seems part and parcel of childhood and adolescence to try lots of things, sorting out the good from the bad over time.

Negative Risks and Challenges

Just because Americans, especially young ones, like to think of themselves as people who take risks and accept challenges, it doesn't mean they leap at any that come along. People are selective, and there are psychological needs that influence the process. We hope that children will aspire to goals that are useful and good in their lives. But sometimes they have aspirations designed to fulfill other unmet needs, needs for affiliation or control, or that express a distorted self-image. These factors can result in a disposition to take negative risks and accept negative challenges. This is always a result of deprivation in one of the conditions of self-esteem.

The current threat of HIV is a case in point. Many young people continue to engage in sexual practices which will ensure the continuing spread of the disease. Many of these risk takers are the same young people who have written themselves off as potential successes in school. The fear of making an effort and aspiring to something more for themselves is greater than the fear of acquiring a life-threatening disease. It seems crazy. But it points out something very important to which educators must pay attention.

Children and adolescents have a propensity to take risks and face challenges. Many young inner-city youth are fully aware of the threat to life posed by gangs and guns, but they feel, often quite consciously, that the benefits of affiliation are worth the risks they take. Teachers see that even very young children will run the risk of punishment and disapproval to fulfill their group affiliation or personal emotional needs. They seem not to consider the consequences of what they do.

But they *do* consider the consequences. They just don't come up with the same answers that adults do. Losing their standing in the group, compromising their personal integrity or denying the values of their reference groups are seen as greater threats than the possibility of school failure. Children and young people take negative risks as part of growing up even though in some places the consequences of these risks can be grave.

Why are they so willing to take negative risks, yet not risk failure by making an effort in school, where even marginal success may lead to a longer and safer life? This is a question researchers and educators must address if the growing problems of at-risk or nonaspiring youth are to be understood.

Teachers who are aware of the risks children take outside of the classroom can use that information to promote discussions about risks, challenges and consequences. Bringing children's real lives into the classroom in ways that are useful educationally—e.g., material for discussions, projects, social studies analysis, and writing—breaks down the insulation between in- and out-of-school experiences. It helps children see school as a part of their lives, not disparate from them.

Risk taking, whether negative or positive, is evidence of the disposition of children to exercise control or gain influence over their own lives as they grow. This disposition becomes distorted when self-esteem is low, and different aspects of self-esteem deprivation result in different distortions. Taking negative risks and seeking negative challenges is evidence that children's sense of efficacy and control needs improving; increasing their self-esteem will help them resist influences that encourage negative risks.

Chapter 3

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem: A Model

Before discussing the connection between power and self-esteem, it is important to give a general overview of self-esteem.

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is a distinctive approach to enhancing children's self-esteem. Knowing the general outline of this model will help give you a broad understanding of the way power and self-esteem are related.

The elements of power discussed in the last chapter are based on the presence of an underlying emotional strength that allows children to aspire, make efforts, overcome fears, take responsibility and, in general, take risks and accept challenges that will benefit their lives. This emotional strength is one of the conditions of self-esteem—the Sense of Power. The Sense of Power arises from the earliest experiences that allow children to feel they have influence or control over important aspects of their lives.

While the Sense of Power is the central element in building children's willingness to take risks and accept challenges in school, the other conditions of self-esteem make important contributions. The goal is to help children strengthen all four conditions of self-esteem. In this chapter you will learn the basic structure of the four conditions model.

General Self-Esteem Principles

There are a few basic assumptions we make in this book when we talk about self-esteem.

- Self-esteem is about feelings. It is basically unconscious and not reportable.
- Self-esteem is about feeling *satisfied.* When basic needs are fulfilled, one feels satisfied. Self-esteem work is about understanding basic emotional needs, how they are expressed in school and how teachers can meet them and ensure that children are learning what they're supposed to.
- Self-esteem has an internal aspect—the set of feelings that children have inside themselves that influence how they respond to their experiences—and an external aspect—the factors in the environment that influence how children feel.
- The transactions between what is going on inside children and what is happening in their environment will determine how each child acts. This creates tremendous variation in how children respond to the same experience.
- Children with high self-esteem respond differently to their environment (external factors) because their internal factors (their feelings) are different from those of children with low self-esteem.
- Children's self-esteem varies during the day and over

longer periods of time based on developmental issues as well as persistent influences of their environment. This means that high self-esteem children can have their esteem lowered (even permanently) if things persistently go badly in the environment. It also means you can raise children's self-esteem if the environment is arranged to consistently have a positive effect on their feelings.

- It is important to distinguish self-esteem from self-concept so teachers don't have unrealistic expectations of changes in children's feelings or behavior that may undermine self-esteem rather than raise it.
- Patterns of behavior are more important than specific behaviors in understanding children's self-esteem.
- Self-esteem influences learning through the way in which children experience satisfaction from learning activities.
- Self-esteem influences social relationships, since children with low self-esteem depend on others for emotional support more than children with high self-esteem do.
- Self-esteem influences creativity through the degree of comfort children have in expressing their internal processes of imagination, fantasy and imagery.
- And, finally, self-esteem is a complex phenomenon, composed of relatively independent sub-factors that result in teachers needing to understand why different interventions work for some children but not for others.

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is the name we have given to four feelings that everyone experiences. These are the *Sense* *of Connectiveness*, the *Sense of Uniqueness*, the *Sense of Power* and the *Sense of Models*.

We use the term *Sense of* to acknowledge that these feelings are often generalized, pervasive, subtle and even unconscious. Feelings don't quite fit into the lexicon of emotions that our language provides. Feelings are usually rich, complex and hard to label. Each of the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem is composed of many issues.

Children with high self-esteem feel each of these conditions frequently, in many different circumstances and with a high degree of intensity. Children with low self-esteem have difficulty feeling one or more of these conditions. They don't feel it very often, when and where they feel it is quite limited, or they don't feel it very intensely.

In a manner of speaking, feeling "bad" is the absence of a significant experience of one or more of these conditions. Persistently feeling bad is a sign of low self-esteem.

Raising self-esteem means that we help children feel these conditions more often and more intensely, until they are able to feel the conditions without our doing something to them.

While these four conditions are feelings that children already have (internal factors), external factors can also influence feelings. You can design classroom experiences that affect specific conditions in children, and by doing so can control the emotional climate in your classroom more precisely.

The following material will serve as a brief overview of the four conditions.

The Sense of Power

Taking risks and accepting challenges is more easily done if children have a high Sense of Power. The Sense of Power is the basis for effective action. Children who have problems taking risks and accepting challenges to succeed in school often are low Power children. They are children who may also be affected by poverty, abuse, prejudice, dysfunctional families, handicaps and learning disabilities. They are found in great numbers in all schools.

In order to have high self-esteem, children need to have the competence to do what they must, the resources required to effectively express their competence, and the opportunity to use their competence to influence important circumstances of their lives.

Children with a high Sense of Power:

- Believe they can do what they set out to do.
- Feel confident that they can handle, one way or another, what is put before them to do, including things that might be risky or challenging.
- Know they can get what they need to do what they have to do.
- Feel they are in charge of their own lives, overall, despite having to depend on others some of the time.
- Feel comfortable when they have a responsibility to fulfill.
- Feel others can't make them do things they really don't want to do.
- Feel confident they can make the decisions they need to in order to solve the problems they're faced with.
- Know they're not going to lose control of themselves despite pressures they may experience.
- Are able to use the skills they have in situations calling for them, and are comfortable about acquiring new skills.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Power is enhanced. This happens under the following conditions:

- They are given the resources needed to meet important objectives in their lives (e.g., having even a small allowance allows children to make some important decisions).
- They are given many ways to exercise a Sense of Power, from being able to manipulate tools and other material resources (external factors) to controlling their emotions and solving problems (internal factors). The more ways children have to exercise their Sense of Power, the greater their feeling of control.
- They have the opportunity to use what they know and do well. This is the main strategy used to *maintain* the Sense of Power.
- They are allowed to make all the decisions they are capable of making successfully, even if they resist doing so. This is the main strategy used to *build* the Sense of Power.
- They have a sense of physical and emotional safety.

The more competencies children have and the more skillful they are at using them, the more confident they can be in meeting new challenges (e.g., children who know how to ride the bus and deal with strangers can profit from greater mobility.) Children who have an adequate Sense of Power have less need to control or manipulate others. Bullying, acting manipulative, avoiding challenges, being irresponsible and having disabling fears are all signs of a diminished Sense of Power.

Taking risks based on positive goals, finding satisfaction in successfully meeting new challenges, and developing overall competence to meet life's demands all require a high Sense of Power.

The Sense of Connectiveness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must be able to gain satisfaction from the people, places or things that they feel connected to, and the value of those connections must be acknowledged by the people who are important to them.

Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness:

- Feel they are a part of something.
- Feel related in important ways to specific people, places or things.
- Identify with a group of people.
- Feel connected to a past or heritage.
- Feel that something important belongs to them (feel a sense of ownership).
- Feel they belong to something or someone.
- Feel good about the things that they feel part of (feel satisfied).
- Know the people or things they feel connected to are thought well of by others.
- Feel they are important to others.
- Feel comfortable with their bodies and trust them to work well (feel connected to themselves).

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Connectiveness is enhanced. This happens when the following conditions are met in the children's environment:

- They have a large number of important connections with people, places and things they value (e.g., friends, family, toys and books, "special" places around the home or neighborhood).

- They experience a significant degree of satisfaction from their connections (i.e., they experience positive feelings, such as love, goodwill, fun, joy, safety or excitement, from their connections more often than negative feelings).
- The people and things children feel connected to are acknowledged as valuable by other people.

When children have a high Sense of Connectiveness along with a high Sense of Power they are more assertive in human relations, enjoy action-oriented group activities, and are more likely to accept leadership roles. They are willing to take risks and accept challenges in groups as well as individually.

The Sense of Uniqueness

In order to have high self-esteem, children must acknowledge and respect the qualities and characteristics about themselves that are special and different, and they must receive confirmation from other people that those qualities and characteristics are important and good.

Children with a high Sense of Uniqueness:

- Feel there is something special about themselves.
- Feel they know things or can do things that no one else knows or can do.
- Know that other people think they are special.
- Are able to express themselves in their own unique way.
- Feel creative and imaginative and have opportunities to safely express their creativity.
- Feel respect for themselves.

- Are able to enjoy feeling different or unusual.
- Feel they are being affirmed for what they *are* rather than being judged for what they are not.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Uniqueness is enhanced. This happens when one or more of the following things occur:

- Children are helped to understand what makes them special (e.g., personal characteristics, skills, affiliations, achievements).
- They are given a wide variety of opportunities to express themselves through a variety of methods (e.g., writing, speaking, drawing, dancing). The greater the variety, the more likely children will find a satisfying avenue for self-expression.
- They are praised for the things they value about themselves, not only the things that adults value about them (e.g., a child may feel that athleticism is more important than intellect, even if the child is at the top of the class academically).
- They are not shamed for characteristics over which they have little or no control (e.g., size, looks, ethnicity, gender, their family's lack of affluence).
- They are helped to see that a combination of characteristics makes them special and different (e.g., just being a girl isn't special, just being big isn't special, and being a catcher is only a little special—but being a girl catcher on a little league team, big enough to stop runners, is *really* special).
- The environment provides positive recognition for a broad array of personal attributes, not simply a narrow range of accomplishments (e.g., children are affirmed

not only for high grades, athletic prowess or money earned but also for being honest, forthright or persistent).

When children have a high Sense of Uniqueness along with a high Sense of Power they are more willing to express opinions and to demonstrate their creative and imaginative inner lives. This combination of strengths allows children to be more successful when positive self-expression is required.

The Sense of Models

In order to have high self-esteem, children must be able to refer to human, philosophical and operational models to help them make sense of the world. They use these reference points to help them set their own goals, values, personal standards and ideals.

Children with a high Sense of Models:

- Know people they feel are worthy of being emulated.
- Feel confident they can tell right from wrong and good from bad.
- Have consistent values and beliefs guiding and directing their actions in different situations.
- Can depend on prior experiences to help them avoid being intimidated by new ones.
- Feel a sense of purpose and know, more or less, where they're headed.
- Are able to make sense of what's going on in their lives and of the circumstances in which they find themselves.
- Know the standards that are being used to judge them, and have a sense of their own standards.
- Know how to go about learning what they need to know.

- Have a sense of order that enables them to organize their environment in order to accomplish their tasks.
- Experience satisfaction from intellectual activity itself, regardless of content.

Children's overall self-esteem is enhanced when their Sense of Models is enhanced. This happens when the following conditions are met:

- Children have adequate *human models* in their lives. Human models are people whom children elect to emulate. If, by mimicking or emulating these models, children are successful in the things they must do, then the human models are *adequate*. These human models may be literary, mythical or historical figures as well as real people in children's experience.
- Children have adequate *philosophical models* in their lives. Philosophical models are the sets of ideas and beliefs that guide and influence children's behavior. To the extent that these models help children succeed in what they must do, they are *adequate* models. Ethical and moral principles that children hear being espoused and see being practiced influence the way they make choices and decisions about ethical matters.
- Children have adequate *operational models* in their lives. Operational models are the array of mental constructs that consciously and unconsciously influence children's actions and performance. Good manners, social skills, and the whole array of normative, age-appropriate skills from tying shoes to flushing toilets fall into the category of operational models—things we learn to do without thinking about them. These models are learned and reinforced through children's experiences; they are learned through repetitive behavior. To

the extent that children have a broad array of such models, they are helped to think clearly, act purposefully and be successful in what they have to do.

When children have a high Sense of Models along with a high Sense of Power they are able to assess the risks and the challenges they accept, and foresee the consequences of what they do. This ability allows one to exercise rational control rather than impulsively take any risks that arise. High Models children tend to be more goal oriented, at any age, and to sort out the risks and challenges they are willing to take according to the goals they have. They will appear to be quite thoughtful, well organized and analytical to the adults who work with them.

The Three Arenas of Self-Esteem

There is another piece of the self-esteem puzzle you need to have. Children experience self-esteem in three arenas: the Personal Arena, the Interpersonal Arena, and the Group Arena.

Children experience their internal states—their feelings—in the Personal Arena. These internal feelings are unique combinations of the Four Conditions of Self-Esteem—Connectiveness, Uniqueness, Power and Models.

Children experience two kinds of external events that influence the way they feel. One kind of external event—direct one-to-one interaction—is called the Interpersonal Arena. There is another person at the other end of the children's one-to-one relationships. In your classroom, the most important other person is you.

The other external event is more general—experiences of group interaction that occur in classrooms, families, schools and other group and institutional settings. This is called the

Group Arena. Group interactions are more than a collection of one-to-one relationships. In classrooms, group interactions include such factors as classroom climate, lessons and the variety of structured group activities that occur, as well as informal play, instruction and social groups.

Understanding self-esteem in terms of these three arenas is key to effectively increasing self-esteem in the classroom.

The Personal Arena

We infer children's feelings from their behavior. Thus, in the Personal Arena we focus on observing children and analyzing, from their behavior, what their particular self-esteem strengths and weaknesses are. This is important to do in order to select self-esteem–building activities that will make a difference to an individual child or group of children.

Children who have low self-esteem behave differently from children who have high self-esteem. Some behavior is clear and obvious; some is subtle and requires persistent observation to see.

The behavior that expresses children's self-esteem is *patterned behavior.* There are characteristic patterned behaviors that represent highs and lows in each of the four conditions.

When children have low self-esteem, the problem usually centers on one of the four conditions. This condition is the *critical condition.* It must be handled in precise ways in order to achieve significant and persistent behavioral changes in the direction of higher self-esteem.

Appendix A contains a Personal Arena Behavior Checklist for each of the four conditions. These checklists will help you identify and understand behavior associated with each condition. You can use the checklists to help determine which condition is a child's critical condition. The larger the number of index behaviors observed, and the greater the frequency or intensity of the behaviors, the greater the difficulty the child has with that particular condition of self-esteem.

The Interpersonal Arena

The Interpersonal Arena is the arena where you communicate with a child one-to-one, using the approaches that work best with children who have weaknesses in each of the four conditions.

What you say, how you say it, and when you say it has a powerful effect on children's self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem are much more sensitive to how they are treated than children with higher self-esteem. Children with low self-esteem react differently to their environment than children with higher self-esteem; they make different presumptions about the meaning of what you are doing or saying to them.

Each of the four conditions represents a different set of feelings. For example, children with a strong Sense of Connectiveness generally are more open, friendly, warm, trusting and convivial. Children with a poor Sense of Connectiveness will be shy, overly aggressive, poor communicators, distant and reluctant to respond fully to others. If you are trying to "connect" with these children, you will have to employ different tactics.

The key to making self-esteem interventions work with individual children is this: Strategies that enhance one condition of self-esteem do not necessarily work to enhance the others. You treat a child who has a low Sense of Connectiveness differently than you do one who has a low sense of Power, if you wish to make a difference in how the child feels.

Just as the behavior that represents a weakness in each condition of self-esteem is patterned, there are special patterns of interaction that have different effects on children. The Interpersonal Arena offers a wide variety of things you can do to affect each condition. This is the arena where you have the most power to influence the self-esteem of individual children.

Teachers who are skillful at enhancing self-esteem in children are highly flexible in selecting ways to act with different children, depending on an individual child's special emotional needs. The four conditions model for self-esteem shows you how to assess what a child needs (Personal Arena) and how to select techniques that will have a powerful influence on children's feelings (Interpersonal Arena).

Appendix B contains a list of techniques and strategies for building each condition of self-esteem in the Interpersonal Arena.

The Group Arena

Most of children's school experience occurs in group situations. By group situation, we mean any time two or more individuals are engaged in an activity having a common objective for all of them. The group can be a small reading group of three or four children, a classroom, or an entire school.

The term *Group Arena* is used to mean anything influencing self-esteem that results from children's experience in any social system in which they participate. School experience is composed of many social systems through which every child must pass. Some pass through them comfortably, others with little or no satisfaction.

The Group Arena is where rules, procedures, norms, policies and other activities occurring in groups influence children's self-esteem. The activities that take place in your classroom influence the self-esteem of everyone in it, including yourself.

Certain things that go on in groups characteristically undermine or enhance the self-esteem of their members. If you understand how different group activities affect self-esteem, you can design activities to enhance self-esteem for all children in your class.

Classroom activities have a different effect on each of the four conditions, and different children have different self-esteem needs. An activity designed to raise children's Sense of Power may not have a significant effect on the Sense of Uniqueness. So a child with a poor Sense of Uniqueness may not benefit significantly from that activity.

Every teacher tends to emphasize some conditions of self-esteem more than others. Which ones are emphasized reflect the teacher's self-esteem, as well as important norms or values in the school.

For example, if you are a teacher who has a high Sense of Connectiveness (many teachers have high Connectiveness), you gain a good deal of satisfaction from interacting with others. You like to interact both frequently and intensively with children in your classroom because of this. As a result, you use classroom activities to increase the frequency and intensity with which children interact, because it gives you satisfaction to do so.

If you also have a low Sense of Power, you will tend to do fewer things that increase children's Sense of Power, and you will find some children who are immune to your warm, loving nature.

When children have problems with one or more of the conditions, they respond favorably to activities that raise those conditions. If you design activities so that all aspects of self-esteem are attended to, all children will find opportunities in your classroom to experience a high level of satisfaction, and their self-esteem will improve if it needs to.

The same principles that apply to the Group Arena in the classroom apply to the school as a whole.

Appendix C contains a list of techniques and strategies for building each condition of self-esteem in the Group Arena.

Review

There are four conditions of self-esteem:

- The Sense of Power
- The Sense of Connectiveness
- The Sense of Uniqueness
- The Sense of Models

There are three arenas in which we work with self-esteem issues:

- The Personal Arena
- The Interpersonal Arena
- The Group Arena

Combining the conditions and the arenas will help us answer the following questions:

Conditions and Arenas

Condition	*Personal Arena*	*Interpersonal Arena*	*Group Arena*
Connectiveness	What does the child do that shows an ability to relate to people, places and things?	What can I do to improve the child's ability to relate more effectively and comfortably?	What can be done to improve the group's ability to have good relationships?
Uniqueness	How does the child show respect for his or her special characteristics?	What can I do to improve the child's self-image and self-respect?	What can be done to increase the group's capacity for creative self-expression?
Power	How does the child show control over his or her life and work?	What can I do to improve the child's skill, sense of responsibility and confidence?	What can be done to improve the group's ability to self-monitor and make good decisions?
Models	How does the child show the sense of order and purpose he or she feels in life?	What can I do to improve the child's understanding and ability to learn?	What can be done to set standards and expectations for the group to achieve?

Chapter 4 Power and Self-Esteem

The Sense of Power reflects the degree to which children perceive themselves able to control or influence what happens in their lives. Children with a high or strong Sense of Power feel as if they have a great deal of control or influence; children with a low Sense of Power feel as if they have little or no control over important areas of their lives. Low Power children may feel they can influence marginal or relatively insignificant aspects of their lives, but not the important central issues.

Children show how strong their Sense of Power is by the risks they take and the challenges they accept. High Power children tend to take a variety of risks that are usually associated with the goals they have. They presume that the greater the challenge, the greater the payoff. Much of this is done unconsciously, because high Power children just enjoy the satisfaction they experience from facing challenges. Fear and anxiety are diminished to manageable levels because these children assume they'll find a way to overcome any difficulties.

High Power children do well in school because the continuing series of challenges they face require them to do things at the cutting edge of their capabilities. Even children with a moderate Sense of Power can do well, since they have learned to take responsibility and try hard.

Low Power children are at a considerable disadvantage when compared with these high Power peers. The unfairness arises because a child's Sense of Power doesn't have much to do with what he or she is capable of learning. It has more to do with upbringing and family background. For this reason, social factors such as family income and status are good predictors of who is likely to be successful in school.

Schools have to provide education that will help children express their natural inclinations to take risks and meet challenges in positive ways. Otherwise millions of children will be confirmed in the belief that they are not capable of using school as a path to aspiration and a means to improve their lot in life.

The Intention to Act

As is true of all the self-esteem conditions, the Sense of Power is a feeling. There are a number of behaviors that characterize the way children act out this feeling, but all of these behaviors express an underlying motive of human behavior that can best be labeled as *the intention to act*.

The intention to act is the key predisposition of high Power children. It is best understood in relation to other intentions children might have, especially when confronted with a challenging or risky task. Low Power children are likely to have an *intention to avoid acting*, manifested as avoidance of responsibility.

Children with a high Sense of Connectiveness are likely to have an *intention to relate*, automatically seeking association with someone in order to share a risk or challenge in mutual support. High Uniqueness children will have an *intention to innovate,* and will be inclined to seek an imaginative or creative response to challenge, allowing fantasy and playfulness to manifest themselves freely. High Models children have an *intention to reflect.* They are more likely to think about a challenge, analyze it and plan a way to meet it. They may or may not do anything about it, depending on the level of their Sense of Power.

Each of these intentions is an unconscious, automatic reaction to challenge. Meeting challenges, especially those that require taking risks, always produces anxiety to some degree. Children with high self-esteem will use their strongest condition to meet such challenges and reduce anxiety in the process. But children with low self-esteem cannot trust their automatic response to challenge. So they tend to find various ways to avoid it.

The intention to act is the characteristic reaction of high Power children, inclining them to *do* something about the challenges they face. They will use the various attributes of their Sense of Power in order to take action. Since schooling is mainly about getting things done—papers, projects, quizzes and games—children who have high Power and a strong intention to act have a distinct advantage in school.

The level of a person's Sense of Power determines how the intention to act is manifested. There are several important behavioral variables that need to be enhanced in order to raise children's Sense of Power. Before implementing the strategies in Chapter 5 or the activities in Chapter 6, it will be helpful if you understand something about the characteristics of high Power children.

Characteristics of High Power Children

Raising children's Sense of Power cannot be done just by giving them new skills. There must be *readiness and willingness* to learn those skills. There are specific attributes of high Power children that help explain why they are willing to take risks and accept challenges. The qualities described here are both preconditions to learning new skills, and attitudes that can be taught along with Power-enhancing skills.

In all classroom activities described in the following chapters, the presence of these qualities is implicit. The basic, academic skills required for further learning and success in life should all be taught in ways that identify and strengthen the following qualities:

- Persistence
- Willingness to take risks and accept challenges
- Diligence
- Decisiveness
- Presumption of success
- Assertiveness
- Presumption of control
- Expression of competence
- Practicality

Persistence

Persistent children stick with a task even if their feelings about the task change. Children with high Power always show more persistence than children with low Power. Low Power children will stick with a task if they believe they will be successful in the end, especially if they have been successful at it before. But high Power children will persist even if the end is unclear.

Low Power children do poorly in school because of a lack of persistence. They give up too soon, even in tasks they are capable of completing successfully. They don't permit themselves to find out.

Willingness to Take Risks and Accept Challenges

Taking risks and accepting challenges is something high Power children do almost as easily as breathing. Children with high Power like to test their capabilities because they have come to feel so much satisfaction from doing this. High Power children don't succeed all the time at what they set out to do, but the odds are so much in their favor that they are more willing to take the risk.

Low Power children feel as if failure is imminent. For them, taking risks only seems to provide the opportunity to fail. This is especially true if they have already failed or have been told before that they've failed at something. There may be other areas in which low Power children take profound risks, but we are concerned here with those children who resist accepting the challenges of intellectual tasks.

Diligence

Diligence is the quality of persevering toward an objective with caution and care. Picking one's way through a mine field might be the best metaphor. Children who are diligent think about what they are doing; they have a plan or idea as to how it might be done, and they try to avoid failure and error along the way. High Power children often exhibit diligence when they're working on a complex task; low Power children often seem impulsive and aimless in how they approach things.

This quality is enhanced when high Power children also have a good Sense of Models, which helps them foresee and plan. Low Power children do not exhibit diligence very often because diligent people presuppose that if they're careful they are more likely to be successful. Low Power children don't expect to succeed *even if they're careful.* High Power children do.

Decisiveness

In your classroom, you ask children to make many decisions. Many of the decisions are "small" ones: "Joey, can you come up here?" Some are more complex: "What is the best way to solve the problem on page 49?" In your estimation, you are asking children to make decisions they are capable of making. But they respond differently.

Some become quite anxious in the face of even minor decisions, seeking the answer in your face or demeanor. They may avoid the issue, whatever it is, by begging ignorance, distracting you with irrelevancies, initiating a conflict or trying to manipulate you into making the decision for them. Others just go right to it. They make the decision easily and comfortably. It is apparent that children feel differently about the challenge of decision making, even when given the same decision to make.

These various reactions are based on an internal predisposition to handle decision making in a certain way. Decision-making ability is deeply connected to the Sense of Power. Making decisions and acting decisively are consequences of having a strong Sense of Power and are key factors in children's ability to take risks and accept challenges successfully. While we often treat decision making as a learnable skill, the disposition to make decisions arises from a deeper emotional matrix. It is the internal aspect of the Sense of Power.

Decisiveness is a special attribute of high Power children. They make decisions and choices quickly because they want to get on with whatever they're doing, and subconsciously presume that if they make the wrong decision, they can change it. Low Power children, on the other hand, hem and haw about decisions because they feel, again subconsciously, as if everything rides on "one roll of the dice." It is rare for a low Power child to try again after failing unless given a lot of support and assistance.

Decisiveness is the key to the Sense of Power, and finding ways to enhance it in children is at the root of many power-enhancing activities. But it is not a simple skill that can be taught in a formal manner, because the ability to be decisive is based on whether a child expects success or failure to result from the effort.

Presumption of Success

Presumption of success in what they set out to do is part of the underlying frame of mind and the emotional condition of children who have a high Sense of Power. It carries them through obstacles, enables them to take risks, and makes them seek challenges. Low Power children do not have this presumption in their view of themselves and the world. When children have a strong presumption of success, their intention to act is fortified. They are more likely to move to action in the face of challenges; it may not be with much forethought, but they assume that by trying this or that they'll come upon a method that will work!

Children usually develop a healthy presumption of success as a result of a wide variety of successes experienced long before they come to school. Children in whom this factor is weak must develop it at school if they are to have any chance to do well.

The presumption of success is more fundamental than ordinary self-confidence. It is a mental and emotional orientation that not only produces self-confident feelings but keeps people moving toward an objective even when they don't feel confident at all. It helps dissolve fears and anxieties the way having confidence does, and it helps contain fear and anxiety when there is a high chance of failure.

Presumption of success is the same quality that highly successful people report having when they "know" they will win out despite grave obstacles. Athletes refer to it when they feel "in the groove," as if they can't fail no matter what the opposition does. When the presumption of success is strong, it is almost like an altered state. It's what leads people to take risks and accept challenges of a substantial nature—to run marathons, climb mountains, write books, start a business.

The presumption of success is different from the kind of fanciful or magical thinking that leads to impractical, romanticized ideas. The presumption of success is always associated with skills, experiences and attitudes that have resulted in prior successes. It is rooted in practical realities.

Even though teachers may not be able to create such an "altered state" in their students, moving them toward the presumption of success is crucial to the development of the Sense of Power. It is especially important for students who have become disaffected with school.

Assertiveness

The quality of assertiveness is difficult to assess. Many low Power children are described as assertive when they should more correctly be called brash, pushy, aggressive or compulsive—all unconscious behaviors that are used to cover up fears and anxieties about failure or rejection. High Power children usually exhibit the quality of assertiveness in pursuit of some objective, not in defense of emotional vulnerability. High Power children are proactive. They use their assertiveness to seek information or resources that will help them accomplish a task, and they will ask for help if they need it.

Low Power children may lay down smoke screens of aggressiveness that cloud the issue of potential failure. They are more likely to initiate conflict in order to distract the teacher from holding them accountable. Low Power children are more likely to be bullies, unless their Sense of Power is so low that they completely withdraw from interacting with others.

Presumption of Control

Control as a factor of the Sense of Power varies in complex ways. Everyone needs to feel in control to some degree—otherwise life would be frightening and unpredictable. High Power children assume they have personal control in many situations, so they don't have to aggressively seek it. Low Power children fight for control in order not to feel as if they are being completely controlled by others. Low Power children usually presume others are trying to control them, since they don't feel in control of things themselves.

High Power children don't feel the need to fight for control but they will be very stubborn if they think control is being taken from them against their will. Low Power children, however, while fighting for it, will easily give control to others if they think they're going to be held accountable for a failure. Thus, low Power children are inclined to blame others for their failures: "He made me do it!" On the other hand, the stubbornness of high Power children seems to be more a function of the wish to complete something on their own, to follow through on something they've started, or to express a competence that gives them satisfaction.

Expression of Competence

Expressing competence is something everyone needs to do. It's more easily done if one *feels* competent. Because high Power children believe they can do lots of things, they easily take the initiative. They thus become more competent as a result of practice. High Power children will take on tasks they don't know how to do, presuming they will get better in the process. This results in their having a broad array of useful skills that they seek to express.

Low Power children, however, may be skillful at many things, but because they don't feel as if they are, they are reluctant to use their skills. This can drive teachers crazy! How often have you observed a low Power child avoid doing a task he or she was perfectly capable of doing successfully? This reluctance to act is usually accompanied by excuses that justify the absence of effort.

We can help children express their competence by giving them *opportunities that allow them to use what they know* as well as learn new skills. One of the reasons so many students are unenthusiastic about learning new skills is that they don't feel respected for the ones they have already learned. Some form of "So what? I don't need to learn this, too!" is a standard attitude of low Power children.

The Sense of Power is felt most strongly when children are allowed to use skills they feel comfortable with, skills that have produced satisfaction for them in the past. Building their confidence in such skills promotes a willingness to learn new ones.

Practicality

Practicality is a dominant characteristic in people who have a high Sense of Power. It means they have a strong commitment to applying and using the things they know to realize short-term concrete objectives. Children with a high Sense of Power are also practical in that their intention to act is always near the surface—they like to be doing things.

Educators often lose sight of this factor, especially when teaching skills instrumental to learning other skills in developmental curricula. An educator can see the "practicality" of learning something that will be needed next week or next month or year. But children want to know what use it is now! High Power children can, to some extent, defer the gratification that comes from applying new knowledge successfully. Low Power children lose interest quickly when they can't see the point of what they're being taught. Practicality and the expression of competence are closely aligned.

Carefully teaching basic skills is the most practical method, in general, of enhancing the Sense of Power and children's overall self-esteem. What makes basic skills "basic," of course, is that they are essential to getting the most ordinary things done: reading directions, finding out how much of something is needed, communicating, having sufficient information at one's command to get on with whatever one needs to do. The basic skills are very useful—if they are taught in ways that children can use! The practical applications must be shown along with teaching the actual skills.

Whatever you identify as basic skills must be seen by children as basic to helping them accomplish the tasks of their lives, at whatever age. For young children, basic skills may be those things that help them manipulate objects and fulfill playful intentions. For older children basic skills are those that enable them to be successful in everyday life as well as in school. Being able to read signs on the street, in stores and at the playground can save a lot of grief and embarrassment. Knowing how to add and subtract helps you figure out whether you have enough to buy something.

Early in their school careers, children should have many experiences of seeing the practical and concrete benefits of what they're learning. The more confidence they have in the practicality of their education, the more they will believe in its ultimate value. Even though developmental curricula are based on what we know about future learning needs, their long-term approach can frustrate children. Children need to see more immediate results from their efforts.

A teaching approach that enhances the Sense of Power will provide many opportunities to understand and apply what's being learned. The more this happens, the happier high Power children are and the more comfortable low Power children become. Chapter 5 suggests many practical and concrete methods for enhancing the Sense of Power.

Chapter

5 Building an Empowering Environment

There are two levels on which power enhancement must operate. The first is overall classroom climate—things that are done day in and day out to promote an atmosphere that affects children positively. In this chapter we will describe nine strategies that affect the classroom climate. The second level of power enhancement is specific activities in the classroom. A number of these will be described in the next chapter.

Using self-esteem activities without overall strategies that give those activities meaning will not have a significant or long-term effect on children. This is a weakness of many activities designed to raise self-esteem apart from ordinary curricular material. Self-esteem enhancement can't really be scheduled—everything that happens to a child each day has the power to either raise or lower self-esteem!

Persistently applying the following strategies in many different ways across a variety of curricular and noncurricular activities and lessons will create an atmosphere that promotes children's feelings of efficacy and raises their Sense of Power. These strategies can be adapted to specific grade levels and to specific children. They can be applied in any subject and for any learning level. They can be used with children who have learning problems. Individual teachers can emphasize those strategies they find most comfortable. If enough teachers in a school commit themselves to using these techniques, and support each other in doing so, an empowering school climate can be developed.

After each teaching strategy you will find mentioned the high-Power characteristics described earlier that are most generated by the strategy.

Use Questions Instead of Statements

Asking questions rather than making declarative statements has a special impact on children with low Sense of Power. Questioning is more than a Socratic method for little kids; it is a way of defusing the automatic resistance that low Power children have to being told what to do.

Low Power children function in a defensive mode. They feel disempowered and become quite sensitive to perceived inroads on their feelings of control. They assume that adults are going to make them do things they don't want to do, or keep them from doing what they wish to do.

This defensiveness makes them slow to react to directives—the foot-dragging tendency that so often angers parents and teachers. Something unusual happens, though, when these children are asked questions rather than given directives. Their automatic resistance is defused while they evaluate the question.

Questions require answers; answers require children to think about the question. Younger children are often acquiescent when asked questions that have several possible answers. Telling a low Power kindergartner to sit down may result in a power struggle. Asking him where he intends to sit and when he intends to do it presents him with a problem to solve. He is likely to respond more amenably to the choices posed by the question than to the lack of choice implicit in a directive.

The form of a question usually does not permit a child to spontaneously and impulsively refuse. Feelings tend to follow semantic rules to a large extent. You can't say no to the question "Where do you intend to sit?" It is not semantically appropriate.

What seems to happen, especially in those with low Power, is that children have to discover whether the question is an infringement on their arena of control before they react. They have to think about it, however briefly. But it's often enough time to abort their innate resistance.

Sometimes children will give surprising answers to questions: "Do you want me to send you to the office again today?" "Yes!" These occasions provide the opportunity for some interesting dialogue as the teacher tries to uncover what's behind the answer. But they don't usually result in an argument, unless the teacher wishes to argue. Sometimes it's only a bid by the child to test one's willingness to engage in discussion rather than just give orders.

By asking children questions instead of giving them directives we create for them the opportunity to develop decisiveness, assertiveness and presumption of control.

Ask Children What They Need

There is one basic question that children ought to be asked again and again: *"What do you need in order to complete this task successfully?"* By establishing a climate in which they're expected to define and answer this question, sooner or later the expectation is fixed for them to be responsible for their own education.

There are many variations of this question, and over time children learn that there are a variety of answers. They might need extra time, help, a pencil, time alone, a partner, a book, an answer, a process—or anything else that may apply at the moment. But how they learn to identify what they need to be successful makes this a most profound question. Most children with a high Sense of Power have already learned to answer it. Children with low Power have rarely been asked it, or asked in a supportive atmosphere where they can count on getting the help they need.

The question can be posed to an individual, a group or the class as a whole. Those who are more adept at knowing what they need can become models for those who have to learn what they need. Thus, all children in the class can begin to feel as if they are in charge of their own learning.

Knowing we can get what we need to do what we must is an extremely important part of feeling empowered. The question helps identify the learning process as an active element in schooling. Children need to be conscious of the process of learning, understand how it works for them, and, finally, appreciate their own individual learning needs and styles.

When children ask for help, and many ask immediately upon being given a task, the teacher should say, "What do *you* think you need in order to do this successfully?" Early in their schooling children will need lots of help in defining what they need, but those who are expected to state needs will learn quickly. When all adults in a school expect children to be able to answer the question in a way appropriate to their age and aptitude, a norm of personal responsibility for learning quickly develops.

The biggest problem for most teachers will be to avoid helping children too quickly with an answer. The motive may be efficiency: "It takes too long for them to figure it out." Or it may be compassion: "I just can't watch them struggle to find the answer." But developing children's Sense of Power always involves their becoming somewhat "tougher" in being able to get what they need for themselves.

Asking this key question over and over again encourages children's persistence, diligence, decisiveness, presumption of success, assertiveness, control, expression of competence, and practicality. As these attributes all get stronger, a child's willingness to take risks and accept challenges grows. This key question is a powerhouse in helping children become powerhouses!

Allow Children to Make Decisions

To be able to make real decisions, children need options to choose from. The Sense of Power is primarily felt through the conscious process of making decisions and carrying them out successfully.

Allowing children to make decisions doesn't mean that control for their learning is totally turned over to them, that the teacher gives up authority. But it does mean that teachers closely evaluate their classes to determine what decisions children are most likely to be able to make successfully. There are always more than meet the eye. And finding ways to provide such options can be a highly creative process for teachers.

Making choices among options has many levels and variations. Choosing between something you love and something you hate is usually easy and nonstressful. But stress increases as the values of the alternatives grow closer—choosing between two things you like and between two things you dislike can both be stressful. Making decisions about things one considers important is more stressful than making choices about unimportant things.

The level of children's Sense of Power affects how much difficulty they will have with making choices. High Power children make decisions easily, no matter what the nature of the choices is. Low Power children tend to avoid making choices, even those with little consequence. They convince themselves that they're not making the choice; someone or something else is choosing for them. Their illusion of their own immunity from accountability makes providing options for low Power children a central tactic in empowering them.

Since the stresses of decision making are so complex, given the variety of children in any classroom, it's best to have many areas in which choices are required. Each child will benefit in different ways according to his or her Sense of Power. The following are examples of options you can provide:

- The color or size of paper on which assignments are done
- Where children will sit to do various tasks
- Whether children need permission or can exercise independent choice about sharpening pencils, getting drinks, going to the washroom, etc.
- Whether children can put their names or a symbolic logo on their papers
- How many problems children ought to do for homework
- Whether children can talk quietly or be silent
- What children can do with free time that has been designed into the program to increase decision-making opportunities
- Choosing partners for drill exercises in spelling, math facts or memorization

There are, of course many other ways to allow children to make choices as part of the regular day-to-day classroom routine.

Another area on which to focus is academic choices. Can children influence what they work on, and when or where, and how much they need to do? Children rarely learn to monitor their own learning or evaluate their own progress because they usually simply follow whatever drill the teacher assigns. "Do the twenty problems on page 123" is the assignment for children who can do it easily as well as for those who can't. Children get used to doing what's assigned rather than thinking about what they need to do.

What if you were to say, "Do ten, fifteen or all twenty problems on page 123—as many as you need to do to feel that you know how to do them. Write on the top of the paper how many you intend to do." Initially, the reaction might very well be chaos, since children are so unlikely to have been given such an option before. But if making such choices becomes a standard practice in your classroom, over time children will adapt to it, just as they adapt to almost anything that's thrown at them. Doing this is not a "self-esteem activity" that is to be done once or twice and then forgotten. It is an overall Power-enhancing strategy that takes time to implement as children adjust to it. And in the long run it can have profound effects.

This strategy also works well if you employ learning teams in your classroom. Chances are that each team will make sure that all of its members learn how to do the problems. Furthermore, many teachers who give such choices to children are surprised by their inclination to do more work, not less. Children love to prove how smart they are!

A further advantage of this technique appears when you give quizzes on the material. If those who characteristically do fewer problems do less well on quizzes, you have a concrete way to show the connection between effort and results. If they do well, they can be affirmed for making good judgments about how much practice they needed!

You can also provide options to children whose low Sense of Power has resulted in behavior problems. These are children who get in power struggles, usually designed to deflect responsibility, override fears, control others, avoid being held accountable for work, or simply express anger or rage that has built up in them. The unusual and creative strategy is to offer them choices in areas where they have previously felt themselves to be victims:

- "Are you planning to have me send you to the office again today? Could you let me know when you'd like to go? If you let me know, we could avoid a hassle."
- "Are you intending to get into another argument with Carlos? If you are, could you tell me how you'd like me to handle it?"
- "You haven't done any math in three days. Are you intending to do any today? If you don't do math, what are you going to do instead?"
- "Why did you choose to push Yolanda out of line? Why didn't you push Archie? Is there anyone else you feel you need to push out of line? Who wouldn't you push out of line?"

Low Power children usually feel like victims who are not accountable for what they do. This is frequently evidenced by their answer—"I don't know"—to queries about why they did something wrong. It's the best answer they have. The real reason low Power children misbehave, if they could give voice to it, would go something like this: "I did what I did because I feel powerless, which makes me afraid and angry at the same time. When I feel that way I lash out at whatever is closest or is most controllable. It doesn't make me feel good; it just makes me feel less bad and I don't know why!"

Providing options for children lets high Power children exercise their higher-order skills in decision making and self-control. Low Power children gradually build up a feeling of efficacy according to the success of the choices they make. This strategy enhances the qualities of decisiveness, presumption of success, assertiveness, presumption of control, expression of competence, and practicality.

Require 100 Percent on Papers

"What do I need to do in order to get by?" This is a question most children ask themselves a lot, after the first or second grade. Doing only enough to get by is one of the things that keeps schools from becoming powerhouses of learning. The question presupposes an acceptable level of poor performance.

In a competitive atmosphere, sorting out children according to accomplishment is simply taken for granted. Some will get 100 percent while others will get lower scores. Even unacceptably low scores are expected to occur and are presumed to be part of the general group response. In such a situation, a teacher who gives all A's can get in as much trouble as one who fails everyone in the class. Not everyone is "supposed to" reach the same level of excellence.

As children sort themselves out academically, they make determinations about how well they think they will do. This stratification is never considered as a choice made by the children; it's thought to be an expression of the range of abilities within the group—except when the potential of some children so far exceeds their performance as to get the teacher's notice. Then it is assumed that the children have some problem that keeps them working at a low level. They do—namely, acceptance by the teacher, the system, the parents and the children themselves that something less than excellence is good enough.

Requiring excellence means that a teacher expects all children to do all the work at the highest level. If twenty math problems are assigned, all of them should be completed correctly. If twenty spelling words are assigned, every child should be able to spell them all. If an essay is to be completed, all grammar, punctuation and spelling should be correct. If there is a test on material that has been taught, everyone should get everything right.

This kind of excellence is often thought to be a silly, idealistic goal, although some very fine teachers have shown that it is possible. Since it has nothing to do with children's innate ability to learn, but everything to do with how the classroom is organized and what expectations children are learning to meet, achieving it is really a matter of teaching practice, not what's inside children.

The most important step in requiring excellence is to reduce the degree to which children can excuse their poor performance. If there is no alternative but to get everything right, the most critical variables remaining are time, effort, organization and the supports available for understanding and correcting errors. None of these factors have anything to do with children's supposed ability.

With this strategy, children *must* always get 100 percent on everything they do. If teachers are persistent, children learn that there is no escape! Over time, they will learn that it's easier to do it right the first time. The smartest and the slowest in a classroom cannot get different grades. Since school performance usually arises from nonschool factors—family education, parents' level of schooling, economics and family values—this strategy really helps make the classroom a fair place, where what's inside kids can come to the top.

Papers are returned to students until they have been done perfectly. Small learning teams are arranged so children have access to others with insight into what has to be done. Grading is diminished as an educational tool. Competition and competitiveness are reduced. Time is given in large measure for "catching up" on work that still remains to be perfected. Those who have caught up may choose among options of what to do with the time.

No one moves ahead until mastery of the work has been demonstrated. Frequent evaluations are made, and the information is fed back to children as to their progress. Basic skills are emphasized, and they are highly valued. Children have learning partners; they help each other check their work and move toward excellence the first time. Peer tutoring and cross-age tutoring are normal features of the program. Parent volunteers are encouraged to work in classrooms, with the purpose of helping children get everything right. Children will come into a classroom with varying competencies, so the leveling of effort will take some time. But it is not impossible if a teacher wishes to do it.

This practice is best done in schools devoted to making it happen. It is difficult for a teacher to use this strategy in a school that allows children to sort themselves out according to traditional ideas of who's going to be successful. Many classrooms are close to being able to require excellence from children. It only needs a whole school to commit itself to the practice for it to occur.

The qualities enhanced through this strategy are persistence, diligence, decisiveness, presumption of success, presumption of control and expression of competence.

Affix Responsibility

Deep down, children know they are responsible for the results of their behavior. If this weren't so, fewer of them would try to avoid being held accountable. Power struggles occur when people are simultaneously trying to avoid being responsible for something while trying to hold someone else accountable for it: "It's your fault." "No, it's not—it's your fault!"

Low Power children try to avoid responsibility. They don't want to be held accountable if something goes wrong. They already feel as powerless as they can stand. They don't want to be told they're at fault any more than they already feel themselves to be, so they fight anyone who tries to hold them accountable—parents, teachers or peers.

Affixing responsibility is different from blaming children, although low Power children don't make this distinction. They try to make fair-minded adults feel guilty about blaming them for things that are beyond their control. "You're not being fair!" has made more parents and teachers cave in to manipulation than almost any other combination of words. Affixing responsibility is not an event-specific act; it should be an attitude that pervades a classroom, a norm in the relationships between teacher and students.

There are a number of questions that children need to be asked in order to create such a climate. Asking questions to affix responsibility is a less provoking way to make the point that in the classroom children are responsible for the consequences of their acts. This includes the consequences that result from lack of effort, excessive dependence on others and unwillingness to do what is required for success.

The following questions can be asked when children have "blown it." Even if sanctions have to be imposed, obtaining children's assessment of their own behavior is a good idea. Often children will find that coming up with their own answers to these questions inspires them to act differently the next time. Many of these questions are to be asked privately, so that children who can't answer them will not feel embarrassed, and should be asked in a way that suggests you are seeking information, not accusing the child of something.

- "Why did you choose to do what you did?"
- "What could you have done differently to avoid this result?"
- "What is likely to happen if you choose to do this again?"
- "What would you have preferred to have happen and what could you have done to bring it about?"
- "Now that this has occurred, what do you intend to do about it?"
- "How can you avoid this in the future?"
- "Is there something you would have liked to do other than what you did?"
- "What were your alternatives, and why did you choose the one you did?"
- "How can you avoid having this happen to you again?"

Teachers should avoid answering these questions for children. Most compassionate adults have a strong tendency to do so, especially when a child seems to struggle to find an answer, but can't. Low Power children are masters in appearing to struggle for an answer, hoping that an adult will provide one. They will characteristically answer these questions with some rendition of "I don't know," an answer that often effectively stops further discussion and frustrates the adult's attempt to get them to take responsibility. Low Power children seem to be aware that if they answer such questions substantively, they are admitting responsibility.

Therefore, these follow-up questions may need to be posed:

- "When do you think you will know?"
- "How much time do you need to think about it?"
- "Can you let me know tomorrow?"
- "How can you find out?"
- "Who can help you come up with an idea for that?"

Several basic principles are being reinforced by such questions: Not having an answer doesn't mean that no answer can be found. Having done something wrong does not mean it can't be done right in the future. Having made a mistake does not mean it can't be corrected. Not having taken responsibility doesn't mean one can't take it in the future.

Children who accept these principles are far along the road to taking responsibility for their own lives and learning. Schools and teachers can be active in promoting the conditions that require this responsibility. The qualities enhanced by this strategy are diligence, assertiveness, presumption of control, expression of competence, and practicality.

Ask for Finished Products

Children with a high Sense of Power gain much satisfaction from seeing the results of their efforts. High Power children are often making things, often creating concrete representations through their intention to act. One of the characteristics of low Power children is their unwillingness to take on the task of producing something. They prefer to just hang around, often bothering people!

The Sense of Power increases in proportion to the degree to which children can observe substantive results from their efforts. They need to see products. They are more impressed with the quantity of something than the quality, and they need models of their own success that they can replicate. Teachers need to include lots of "things" to be built, made or produced so that children can see real results.

This means children should often be given large assignments which they can successfully complete. For example, have them do one hundred arithmetic problems as a review of work they've all demonstrated they can do (see "Require 100 Percent"). Have them do artwork on very large sheets of paper, or work on stories or "novels" for several weeks until they have accumulated a body of material. Doing illustrations for written work is a way to augment product. Adding decorations to ordinary assignments gives a personal touch to an impersonal task.

There can be group building projects in the classroom and around the school—building forts, study carrels and other projects that require putting large things together. Younger children should have large building blocks available. Older children should be allowed to redecorate the classroom frequently, as a large "renovation" project. Projects requiring physical labor are good for low Power children, e.g., moving heavy objects cooperatively. Doing murals on large rolls of paper hung in the halls of the school is also good cooperative work.

Teachers tend to be concerned with quality, as they should. But children are more concrete; they like to see and touch what they've done even if it's not the best. Low Power children desperately need to see evidence of their effort or they can't feel as if they've done something. Children should have work folders, and much ado should be made about how much is in them. The products should be sent home periodically. Even if not aesthetically sophisticated, student work should be the primary decoration in the room.

All this effort has the general purpose of raising the Sense of Power. In classrooms where there are many low Power children, these practices are absolutely necessary to give them a feeling of efficacy. Knowing that one is affecting the environment is primary evidence of one's influence, and thus increases one's Sense of Power.

This strategy enhances children's willingness to take risks and accept challenges, diligence, presumption of success, assertiveness, presumption of control, expression of competence, and practicality.

Assign Hand and Body Activities

Much of children's Sense of Power is associated with control over their bodies. The intention to act has a physical component often overlooked in the intellectual climate of academic education. Children who don't feel able to meet mental tasks may need the support of physical activities until they do. Again, this factor tends to be more important for children with a low Sense of Power than for others.

Physical activities are not only those associated with physical education, movement or dance. Anything associated with using one's hands or body to accomplish an objective could be considered a physical activity and source of satisfaction for some children. Arts and crafts fall into this area of course, but building, hauling, sweeping, washing windows—even penmanship—do too.

Physical activities give children alternative ways to express competence and extend the range of valued behavior in school. Sports are considered very important in many areas because they allow children to be successful who might otherwise not be. The same principle might be used to enable more children to view school as a relevant place to express a broad range of competencies and to achieve some measure of positive recognition for them. It is even more important when children are struggling with academic tasks.

The trick is to avoid having a yawning chasm between intellectual activity and physical activity, where one is considered more important than the other. Find ways to link these two types of activity so that children with more physical than intellectual competence are not further disadvantaged by a system that values their more academically oriented peers.

This strategy is especially important in the elementary years when it is critical to help children maintain optimism about their prospects for school success. Developmental as well as cultural factors may incline some children to be late bloomers academically. Not only do some children maintain their self-esteem through physical competence, but some families place a higher value on physical prowess than on intellectual ability.

Being able to make things that "do something" is a key feature in building the Sense of Power. This has always been a natural aspect of children's growing up. Children in primitive societies make small replicas of things adults use. Adults usually remember something from their childhoods that they created with their own hands, something that showed their capacity for "doing."

Children constantly use the materials of their environment to make things. Since so much of what children make is associated with play rather than "work," adults may lose sight of the importance such activities have in building overall physical competence.

There are many ways to satisfy children's need to "do," and thus build their Sense of Power, in the classroom:

- Engage the entire class in a project that requires various skills. For example: If children write a story, have them recopy it in their absolutely best handwriting, and then have them make small frames from cardboard or wood so that the stories can be affixed to the wall. Have them decorate the stories and the frames. Have kids with the best handwriting recopy stories for others, who will make the frames for them in return. Make the whole activity so complex and fulfilling that who does what is less important than the overall sense of accomplishment that the children feel when they look at the walls decorated with their framed story-pictures.

- Allow kids to doodle on their papers as long as it doesn't interfere with the work. Adults do it all the time as a release of pent-up energy.
- Have children make primitive clipboards so they can have a hard surface to work on even when sitting on the floor or lying down.
- Teach children handicrafts such as origami or macrame that don't require special equipment or financial outlays—things they can do by themselves at home even if their families are poor.
- Provide lots of time for children to draw, even if only in lead pencil on newsprint. Allow drawing to be an acceptable activity for filling time if children finish an academic task before the rest of the class does.
- Have lots of "stuff" available for kids to make things with. Have a "shop" corner in the classroom where children can keep small tools they might need from time to time.
- Allow children who become involved in a larger project to have time to work on it. Low Power children who complete a large or complex physical project may, sooner or later, be more inclined to give academic tasks greater effort. Success builds its own motivation.

Giving children the chance to use their hands and bodies to make and do things will enhance the qualities of persistence, diligence, presumption of success, presumption of control, expression of competence, and practicality.

Give Plenty of Feedback

Children need to know how well they're doing. Children with high self-esteem, especially a high Sense of Power, have internal standards that allow them to make such judgments. Most children, though, don't have enough information or experience to be able to evaluate their own progress.

Children have to know how well they're doing so they can decide whether to work harder or not, according to the standards they've adopted. Some children have very high standards; they want to know whether anything—no matter how small—is still needed in something they've done, so they can fix it. Other children need to know whether they've done enough, so they can stop! In any case, the kind of information children need is not to be found in a letter or number grade.

Feedback to children has three basic components:

- Specific praise that points out the things they've done well.
- Indication of what is yet to be done. This is different from criticism. It is pointing out the discrepancy between what has been accomplished and what the standards or goals of the activity are.
- Acknowledgment of how far they've come. This is primary evidence of their ability to learn and grow, which children need in order to develop confidence in their ability to meet the objectives they set for themselves.

Feedback to children has little to do with evaluation, grading or assessment. Educators want to evaluate or assess in order to plan, to identify what different groups of children need as well as what individual children are lacking. Giving feedback has a different purpose: it provides a context in which children can feel positive about their accomplishments and satisfied with the efforts they've made. Such experiences lead to a greater willingness to take risks and accept challenges because children are able to find evidence of their success. This is what enhances self-esteem.

Giving feedback is a constant process. As children are working, the teacher should move about the room, offering such comments as: "The way you've used the red in this painting is very pleasing." "I see you've done all of these problems correctly so far." "Are you sure that you've checked all of your work? I see a place where you haven't yet."

Frequent feedback about how far children have come should also be given: "Are you aware that you did not know how to read this last month?" "Do you remember when you couldn't understand how to do this problem?" "Did you ever think you'd be able to write so much about something you did?" "I remember when you couldn't avoid getting into a fight. You haven't been in one in over a week. Are you aware of that?" "Are you satisfied with how much progress you've made? Is there something more you'd like to do?"

This feedback doesn't have to be formal in order to be meaningful to children. Parents and other educators may need such formality in the form of grades, reports or portfolios; but a big impediment to doing good assessment is the assumption that children need the information about their progress in the same way that adults do.

Praise is an important factor in enhancing children's Sense of Power, if it's the right kind of praise. For children with low Power, the most effective praise is very specific, pointing out among a variety of factors the most praiseworthy ones—a certain segment of a painting, a specific type of problem that a child does well, a misbehavior not carried out, an objective achieved. Low Power children need specific praise so that they can replicate the behavior, confident that they'll get it right again. Praise that is too global, indirect or effusive doesn't help them achieve efficacy—which is the point of praising them in the first place!

As with the other strategies discussed in this chapter, giving feedback can become a normal part of the everyday life of the classroom. Children need to learn how to give each other feedback that is helpful. But one should never lose sight of the real goal, which is to help children develop internal standards for judging their own performance. This is best effected through raising the general level of their self-esteem.

Feedback is information that at its best has a somewhat impersonal quality, even as praise. Low Power children have been subject to intense criticism, both overt and covert. By whatever means, they have come to mistrust their capacity for being successful. They often view praise and criticism as instruments that adults use to control them. They often disparage praise because they fear they'll be held accountable for higher performance. They reject criticism because by accepting it they feel as if they're giving in to control, whether from adults or peers. When teachers develop the ability to provide continuing objective and impersonal feedback to children, even low Power kids begin to trust the feedback more.

This strategy supports all the important qualities that are expressions of the Sense of Power. When done properly, it makes children feel that they are respected partners in the learning process.

Ensure Effective Discipline

One of the worst characteristics of low Power children is the way they resist perceived limitations on their narrow arena of control. They drag their feet, are verbally abusive, blame everyone but themselves, and break those rules for which they're willing to accept the consequences. In so doing, they further their feelings of victimization while still maintaining an illusion of efficacy and self-determination. Most discipline procedures play into the hands of low Power children by giving them something to resist.

Effective discipline procedures relate to children's Sense of Power in the following ways:

- They shift the locus of control from external constraints to internal self-restraint in ways appropriate to children's age and emotional development.
- They extend children's feelings of control by enabling them to manage their environment, through participation in determining rules and discipline procedures.
- They clarify boundaries and limits within which children can make successful decisions.
- They specify acceptable and appropriate behavior and teach children how to apply that behavior in a variety of situations.
- By being clear, consistent and unambiguous they cast a blanket of safety and security that allows children more freedom to learn.
- They enable children to use each other's resources and capabilities to achieve important objectives.
- They focus on building a climate devoted to the learning goals of the school rather than directed at eradicating misbehavior.
- They direct children's attention to taking risks and accepting challenges in academic areas rather than resisting the system.

Discipline programs that empower children include the following characteristics:

- A limited number of rules are made very clear.
- Adults define and impose rules with considerable consistency.
- All staff assume responsibility for monitoring children's behavior.
- Rules define expected behavior as precisely as possible.
- Behavior, rules and discipline are discussed frequently with children, not only when there's a problem.
- Children participate in defining rules and consequences in both classroom and school.
- Rules are imposed consistently, and adults monitor themselves to reduce arbitrariness.
- Parents are given handbooks on discipline procedures and are involved in other ways in setting standards.
- Effective teaching that maintains involvement, interest and challenge is seen as the most powerful discipline instrument.
- Teachers discuss, define and agree on standards and procedures to use throughout the school.
- Self-control, self-restraint and self-discipline are constantly emphasized as goals; groups may be acknowledged but are never punished for the behavior of some of their members.

This chapter has reviewed nine different strategies for enhancing the Sense of Power. Each of these strategies can be used in many ways in both formal and informal teaching/learning situations. They are the things that excellent teachers do to make their classrooms special. But these strategies aren't mysteries when viewed as ways to approach ordinary interpersonal actions.

It is easier to practice these techniques if one has a good Sense of Power oneself. The strategies require a degree of self-control and self-discipline more characteristic of higher Power people. But teachers can help each other to implement these strategies, and if an entire school takes on the task of enhancing children's Sense of Power, support will be readily available.

The strategies discussed in this chapter build an empowering environment for children. Such an environment supports activities designed to raise children's Sense of Power. The next chapter describes a number of specific, classroom-tested, Power-building activities that you can use, adjust and embellish to fit your own circumstances and the characteristics of the children in your classroom.

Chapter

6

Classroom Activities and Vocational Preparation

Teaching strategies and classroom activities that raise the Sense of Power always result in children feeling that they have control or influence over something important to them. This feeling of control is acquired through making decisions, independent of authority, and carrying them out successfully. All activities that raise the Sense of Power use this basic approach.

Children believe they have control when they accomplish something on their own or make a special contribution to the group's ability to get something done. This sense of accomplishment is usually experienced individually and does not require special acknowledgment or recognition. Children measure their success against their own idea of what is required. In order to have a successful experience, children need to know what standard they must meet—what is expected or required in different learning situations—or else they will substitute their own, possibly distorted, ideas.

Classroom Activities

The activities in this chapter have been used by classroom teachers and have a special role in raising children's Sense of Power. However, they are best used as a stimulus to your own ideas. Remember that such specific activities alone, unless supported by ongoing methods that raise the Sense of Power, will have little long-term effect. But when used together with the strategies that build an empowering classroom climate described in Chapter 5, the following activities can contribute significantly to building the Sense of Power.

Helpful Hints

If children are working in groups and are to give correct answers to questions, have them help each other in this unique way: When a child doesn't know the correct answer—and there is one—the other children may help by giving *hints* as to the correct answer, for however long it takes. Those who know the answer must explore their understanding of it in order to come up with a hint; those who don't know it can have a discovery experience.

Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative learning groups or teams have a profound impact on both learning and self-esteem. They enhance the Sense of Power when they are organized so that individual children have specialized roles within the group, something for which they have singular responsibility but for which they can also use the group's help. Rather than having everyone responsible for each process, have the group learn to delegate different tasks to each of its members. Through this activity, children learn how to use teams to accomplish significant and complex tasks.

Bilingual Helpers

Children in bilingual classes can become helpers throughout the school when there are many children with limited English. If bilingual children help those with more limited English skills, the bilingual children are helped to become more versatile in both languages while being nonthreatening aides to others. Younger children can help older ones, and vice versa. When given permission to use either language, the children will do the practical thing; they will use the one that will help each other most.

How Will I Know You Know?

Allow the children to design their own quizzes and tests. The basic question to ask is, "How will you be able to show me that you know what I've taught you?" Children who have learned the material will have good ideas about the sort of questions and tasks that could be posed to show you what they've learned. Children who haven't learned the material may find the challenge of their own classmates a better goad to future effort than the usual challenge by the teacher. Start this activity by having children add a few items to quizzes you've prepared, and gradually increase their contributions. As they learn that they will be responsible for preparing the quizzes, they will pay more attention to the material. This activity increases children's feelings of responsibility for their own learning.

Everyone Is a Leader

Distribute leadership opportunities to everyone in your class. Create activities in which children have to take leadership; cooperative learning or sports teams are two natural arenas. Teach children how to be leaders in their groups and to give support to children with a lower Sense of Power, who are likely to be either too aggressive or too diffident in leadership roles.

Emphasize leadership activities as being *important to learning*. When children show they can assume leadership roles well, give recognition in some concrete way—with certificates or exemption from some responsibility, for example. Show children that supporting their leaders helps gets things done, and that giving support garners it when they themselves become leaders.

Building Bridges and Other Things

Children can learn that by working together they can build big things by putting together small things. Have teams of children build bridges, buildings and abstract constructions, using toothpicks with clay balls at the joints. This activity can be ongoing for several weeks if there is lots of material and children are encouraged to create large models. Through this activity, children learn that by taking their time, working together and having a plan, they can make something quite significant. Keep the models in a safe place as the project proceeds. Spray-paint the finished products and display them for the whole school. Have children build stories, paintings and poems in the same way. Making something big from something small helps low Power children feel more effective.

Choose What to Learn

Have children pick the content of their learning activities as much as possible. Give more than one option with each assignment; e.g., write a story about yourself, a friend, a family member or a mythical figure. When children have choices they tend to bring more commitment to the task. Children with low Power will need help making choices in areas where they can't identify a preference. Have them choose any ten problems from a list of twenty, or any twenty spelling words from a list of thirty. Always provide lists of options so that high Power children can have many ideas and low Power children can pick one from the list. When individuals with high Power or especially creative ideas come up with an unusual option, let them have a go at it as long as it fits your criteria for the task.

Bringing the Out-of-School into School

Place special emphasis on the things children do outside school and build activities around them. A teacher can go far beyond the "What did you do on your summer vacation?" stereotype: "Find out how your mother used arithmetic at the supermarket." "Write a story about how you resolved a disagreement with a friend or relative." "Look for words on billboards or TV that you don't know; write them down and bring them to school." "Discuss where your Sunday dinner came from; start by writing down what you ate!"

The Memory Bag

Have children bring from home a bag of small items or pictures that represent their families' history and heritage. Have them also bring items that represent special milestones in their own lives. Over several days, have each child give an oral presentation about an item from the bag, one at a time. This activity allows children to focus their talk on concrete items, has a certain degree of mystery (what will come from the bag next?) and permits children to plan their own recitation. Low Power children can give quite competent short presentations; high Power children will embellish and will need some constraints to keep them from going on and on. But everyone will be an expert on the things that come out of his or her bag.

Making a Feeling

Pick a feeling for children to think about and allow them to plan their own special way to express it. They can write a poem or story. They can draw or paint a picture. They can act out the feeling or give a talk about it. They can build a model that demonstrates it, read a story that exemplifies it, or create a collage. The point is to give children control over how they will express a special feeling. Projects can be personal or impersonal. Children can use special talents and find a way to do the project that is uniquely theirs, reducing comparisons and judgments. This is another form of giving children control over their learning activities.

Mending Mistakes

When a child breaks a rule or offends classroom behavior standards, have a special way to exercise consequences. Have the child write a story, an essay or a poem about what he or she did and what could have been done differently to avoid the problem. If the child has difficulty writing he or she might draw a series of pictures instead.

Focus attention on the "what I could have done differently" part. Make every transgression an occasion for learning and improving skills. Don't accept trivial or slipshod products. This activity can be used along with or instead of other sanctions and consequences. It builds the Sense of Power by requiring children to use learned skills, extend their skills and take responsibility for designing alternative behaviors.

Practical Learning

Use parents or other volunteers to help children understand how the skills they're learning can be used in practical ways. Carpenters can show how simple math is used practically. Nurses can show how they use simple health principles in their work. Retail sales people can help young children learn about handling money. Grocers can help children learn about consumer issues. The Sense of Power is enhanced when children find practical uses for what they have learned.

Vocational Preparation

The relationship of aspiration to self-esteem was discussed in Chapter 2. But aspiration has meaning for children only when it has a context. The most obvious is the way children perceive themselves to have vocational futures. Vocational preparation, even in the elementary years, is a method for lending substance to aspiration.

Children's self-esteem, level of aspiration and feelings of efficacy are at issue here. Children need something on which their imaginings about the future can take hold. They need to believe they're learning something about how to be competent people in the world of work that awaits them.

The Sense of Power is always associated with doing something that produces practical results. Children who have a high Sense of Power have a strong inclination to do challenging and complex activities, and they believe they'll carry such activities off successfully. They get satisfaction from seeing the concrete manifestation of their intentions.

The self-esteem variant of vocational preparation has to do with giving children many opportunities to learn skills that they believe have practical utility and allowing them to use those skills in different ways. In childhood, these skills have to do with making, building, constructing, and with manifesting one's control and efficacy through doing things "more, bigger and faster."

In order to raise children's Sense of Power we must give them learning experiences in which they are able to make something, learn how important it is in the adult world, and believe they're capable of doing it again when they want or need to. Children, like adults, want to do things they think they're good at. Children with a high Sense of Power already feel as if there is much they're good at, so the issue seems less critical. But take away their opportunity to prove their competence and you will quickly see evidence of a decreased Sense of Power.

Vocational preparation in elementary and middle schools is not usually built into the program. School resources are limited, and training in basic academic skills takes precedence. But there are some things schools and teachers can do.

Make Many Things

Have many handwork opportunities for children. Create opportunities for making, building, constructing and using things. Find ways to integrate concrete production with children's academic tasks, such as making books from collections of their writings, framing their best artwork, making models for social studies projects or doing science experiments.

What's the Use of It?

Talk about the usefulness of what children are learning. Show how seemingly abstract tasks such as learning multiplication tables have practical value. Show them that their parents use the same skills to make a living that the children are learning in school.

Building Center, Inc.

Have workstations in the room where children can make things: a Cut-and-Paste Center with colored papers, fabric scraps and other things that can be glued together into collages or art projects, or a Builders' Center where there are lots of predrilled pieces of wood that can be screwed, nailed and doweled together to make boxes and other useful items. Let the children work on their own projects when finished with academic tasks.

Schoolwork as Product

Offer children many options for *how* they do regular academic work. Have paper of different colors and sizes, pens and pencils of different colors. Let children choose how they want the "product" of their work to look.

Working Skills

Teach children how to work—how to organize, analyze, plan, arrange, and produce their work in a timely manner to meet predetermined standards.

Things to Use at Home

Have children make things for their families so they can receive reinforcement for school productivity at home.

How Do Workers Work?

Expose children to different vocations through guest speakers, field trips, movies and reading. Talk about these as vocations. Have children think about what different vocations require. Plan academic tasks associated with the vocations so that there is immediate relevance, e.g., have a measurement activity after seeing a movie about house building.

School Workers

Have children work on things around the school. Have a clean-up day or build climbing apparatus. Have class and school gardens when possible. Have cleaning tools in classrooms so children can clean up their own messes rather than waiting for the custodian to do it.

Tools of the Trade

Create hand-eye coordination activities such as cutting a curved line on a piece of paper or making huge paper chains that cover the whole ceiling. Have the class work on a giant mural (on paper) to hang in the multipurpose room or gym. Have children learn how to use compasses, protractors, rulers, tape measures, screwdrivers and other small tools used in daily life. Help them become very good at using these tools.

Professional Apparatus

Provide access to typewriters, printing presses, tracing material and other means of helping children do things that are bigger, better, fancier, more embellished or imaginative.

Chapter 7

Standards and Expectations: A Special Issue

The phrase *standards and expectations* is tossed about in education as if it were something like a reading program that could be implemented next month. Research and common observation support the conclusion that higher expectations, overall, produce higher performance results. This should come as no surprise. It's a fact known by social scientists, industrial psychologists and others for many years. So why don't we just raise expectations and cure the problems of American education with one wave of the wand?

The answer is that doing so is not likely to have much effect on vast numbers of teachers, children and parents. The issue of how expectations influence performance in education is more complex than that. Consider the web of expectations about school performance that the average child lives with:

- Self-expectations
- Teacher expectations
- Peer expectations
- Parent expectations

Which source of expectation influences children most depends on the situation in which they live. There is no guarantee that the school's expectations as monitored through teachers in classrooms will be the strongest. Many teachers know this.

The real question is, what can schools and teachers do to affect the web of expectations that influence how children perform? Each of the sources has to be analyzed, and strategies specific to it have to be designed. The school cannot simply change its expectations according to some formula and assume that children will automatically meet the new expectations.

The word *expectation* derives from a Latin root that means "to await" or "to look forward to." This suggests that having expectations is not a demand for a certain level of performance but an anticipation, based on faith and hope, that a child is capable of achieving that level of performance.

A "standard" on the other hand, is an absolute mark that children are expected to meet. Standards and expectations are different. This distinction is very important, especially because children's own expectations of themselves are more important than anyone else's. Related to their self-esteem, their expectations determine whether they'll be able to meet the standards that are set for them.

Self-Expectations

Children cannot have high expectations for themselves unless their self-esteem is high enough. Without good self-esteem, children set low standards or, conversely, high but unachievable ones designed to confirm their presumption of their own incompetence. This reinforces their poor self-concept and keeps adults from expecting them to be successful. As so many teachers know, the innate abilities of many children far exceed their performance.

When children persistently act according to low expectations of themselves, their poor performance becomes the standard by which others' expectations of them are formed. In other words, children's expectations of themselves influence the way their parents, teachers and peers perceive them. Expectation is a two-way street!

Children have difficulty meeting standards that differ from their self-expectations. This is true in both directions, i.e., when standards are either much higher *or* much lower than children's expectations of themselves. When standards are lower than children's self-expectations are, boredom and anger over their inability to get adults to see them the way they see themselves have a negative influence on performance. When standards are much higher than children's self-expectations, failure is the usual result, with further damage to self-esteem.

Setting higher standards for children can only be beneficial if children's expectations of themselves are raised. The key to raising self-expectations lies in the Sense of Power. All the strategies and activities described in this book to raise children's Sense of Power will contribute to changing children's expectations of themselves.

But there are the other influences on children's expectations: teachers, parents and peers. Let's look at each of these.

Teacher Expectations

Teachers' expectations of children have a dominant influence in the classroom. If teachers understand the distinction between standards and expectations, it will help solve a number of problems. Asking children to do more of something, to do something faster, or to do something better are the three ways in which standards can be raised. Thus, individual teachers have flexibility in the way standards are raised for individual children or for the class as a whole. You can, for example, give children more problems to do, give them less time in which to do the usual number, or require that all be done correctly, with no errors.

But expectations are a different matter. These have to do with the teacher's anticipation of the degree to which children will be able to meet higher standards. Expectations are a measure of one's faith in and optimism about individual children or the group. It's common to have high expectations for children who have shown great ability; it's rare to expect more from children who have persistently performed poorly. But what is difficult for teachers to determine is whether poor performance is the result of low ability or a child's own low self-expectations.

Teachers either have faith and optimism about kids or they don't. The way they feel about children affects self-esteem through the subtle ways in which these feelings influence teacher behavior.

How much time children are given to answer a question, how many chances they are given to get it right, where they are permitted to sit, how much time teachers devote to helping them, how often teachers smile at them, how affectionate teachers are toward them, how much "slack" teachers give them—all of these are related to how teachers feel. These factors are the measure of the faith a teacher has in a child. They are the way expectations are communicated, just as the level of work is the way standards are relayed.

Teachers need proof that a student is worthy of their faith and optimism. In the absence of such proof, it is easier to focus time and attention on those children who seem more likely to fulfill that faith and optimism. The paradox in the classroom is that the behavior of teachers toward children is a key factor in determining the effort children make and the performance results they achieve. It's a pedagogical "chicken and egg" problem.

Teachers have to help children become more successful so that their self-expectations will rise, enabling them to meet higher standards. But children's success will also influence how much teachers expect of them. How can teachers' expectations remain optimistic—especially for children who are seen as underachievers? The following are some ways of accomplishing this:

- Mutual support among teachers within a school will help them maintain a positive attitude toward children. This requires strong administrative support for innovative as well as traditional methods for reaching children.
- Sharing success stories among the teaching staff is important, since underachieving children have many similar characteristics. What works for one teacher is likely to work for another.
- Building the Sense of Power as an overall strategy gives teachers many options in addition to the regular curriculum for changing children's expectations of themselves.
- Engaging parents in the learning process as much as possible is a method of extending the teacher's influence and increasing the likelihood of children's success. This will be discussed in greater detail later.

At the root of teachers' faith in children's potential is faith in their own ability to uncover and nurture that potential. Teachers who lack that faith in themselves are going to find it harder to be optimistic about the low Power children in their classes.

Peer Expectations

The expectations that peer groups have of their members is another hurdle for teachers to overcome in altering children's expectations of themselves. Children's need for peer group affiliation tends to make them adjust their behavior to match what they think the group expects of them. This factor becomes stronger as children move up through the grades; it is very powerful in the middle school years.

This is why it is so important that all-school approaches to empowering children be implemented, especially those listed in the Group Arena Techniques in Appendix C. Although we tend to see and promote learning as an individual's responsibility, we must simultaneously recognize and seek to understand how much it is influenced by group expectations.

Schools generally take an adversarial stance regarding the influence of peer groups on underachieving children. Teachers tend to see the influence of peer groups as a distraction from learning processes: "Talk with your friends during recess. Now is not the time for socializing."

Peer relationships need not be adversarial to the school, however. There are ways to enlist peer expectations and group affiliations in the service of learning:

- Cooperative learning methods can transform the values and behaviors of peer groups into those that support school effort rather than undermine it.
- When teachers and friends compete for children's commitment, teachers usually lose. Finding ways to support friendships within the school is an important alternative strategy.
- Using school projects as group activities to be done both in school and as homework is one way to inject the

school into peer group relations when children are away from school.

- Permitting friendship groups to function as learning teams allows the terms of the friendship to change over time. Emphasizing how friends can help each other be successful helps children expand their concept of friendship.
- It is important to have rules for classroom behavior that include rather than exclude social behavior. One can say, for example, "Talking quietly is permitted as long as it doesn't disturb others."
- Make the role of friendship important in the classroom by talking about it and having children consider how it helps and hinders their success in school.

These can become powerful ways to influence the impact of peer groups on learning if started right from the beginning of kindergarten and emphasized throughout children's school careers. It is hard to begin changing the influence of peer groups in middle school without a tradition of supporting friendship as a deep-seated school ethic.

Working with peer group expectations is necessary if we are to raise children's expectations of themselves. This is especially the case where community, cultural, ethnic, and family values do not actively support school success.

Parent Expectations

Parents who have a low Sense of Power tend to pass it on to their children. Those with weak feelings of efficacy resulting in low aspirations tend to pass on low aspirations to their children. For good or for ill, family traditions are powerful influences on children's school performance, but not necessarily the most powerful in every instance. Schools *can* influence how parents affect their children.

Research is unequivocal on the subject of parental influence on children's school performance. The more parents are involved in their children's education, the better. Since children tend to live up to parents' expectations, the children's performance is likely to be better if those expectations are higher. Values and standards at home influence how children behave at school. The safety, security and support children receive at home also condition how they will act in school.

Schools cannot take it for granted that a child's home life will support his or her success in school. This is as true in middle-class suburbs as it is in the inner city. Family life is just not what it used to be! There are problems within education that are a result of changing family dynamics in the society as a whole. But the major problem is not that families have been changing; it's that schools have not been changing fast enough to deal with the new family stresses.

Classroom teachers, as well as administrators, nurses, resource specialists, psychologists, school social workers and counselors, have a role to play in empowering families so that children can be empowered. The following suggestions can help increase parents' Sense of Power:

- Have a Classroom Parents Club, even if only a few parents can be active in it. Invite the club to support different activities in the room.
- Develop a system for frequent progress reports to parents, not limited to regular reporting times. Keep it simple (making adequate progress/not making adequate progress) and mail it home every few weeks.
- Send notes home frequently that comment favorably on something a child accomplished. This is especially important when a child's usual performance is weak.

- Publish a class roster so that parents know who else is in the class and can access playmates for their children.
- Have an open-door policy that enables parents to visit the class whenever they wish. Few will do so, but all will feel better knowing they can.
- Have a classroom newsletter that is sent home regularly with the children.
- Call parents in the evening from time to time. Then working parents will feel as if teachers are thinking about them even when they can't be involved in school.
- Create volunteer opportunities for parents in the classroom. If they do show up, make sure they'll have something to do.
- Have the habit of pointing out children's strengths to parents rather than emphasizing weaknesses. Parents need to find occasion for taking pride in their children's positive accomplishments, evidence of their own positive influence. When children's faults are pointed out, most parents feel guilty, and parents who feel guilty feel disempowered.
- Have written sets of instructions about how to help children at home: How to Read to Your Children, How to Help with Homework, What to Do When You Don't Know the Answer, Books and Toys That Help Children Learn, How to Use the Library. Have them translated for parents who don't speak English. Several teachers can share this effort.
- Reach out to parents who don't reach out to the school. These are most likely to be parents of children who are having difficulties. They may be reluctant to come to school for fear they'll be criticized for their children's performance. In most cases, their *attitude* about the

school is at the root of their alienation. They may not seem to respond to your overtures, but they may be slowly changing their attitudes about the friendliness of the school.

Keep making parents aware of children's performance. Emphasize progress, and offer praise and support to parents for the support they're giving their children. Keep an open and friendly attitude. Inspire parents to be as invested in their children's education as you are. Respond to parents' concerns and questions. Offer specific suggestions to help parents help their children with schoolwork. Let parents know what's going on in the classroom.

Helping parents increase their expectations for their children, and their expectations of what the school can do for their children, will enable more children to believe in their own abilities and raise their self-expectations. Only then will children be able to meet the higher standards educators would like to set for them.

Chapter

8

To the Administrator: Empowering Your School

Being the principal of an American elementary or middle school may be one of the most challenging jobs in management—when it's done right. It involves many different roles and functions, from being a marketing expert to performing as sensitive counselor for children, families and staff. Good administrators must be competent in many fields, often fields that conflict with each other, such as financial management (spend less) and instructional leadership (spend more).

Hardly anyone knows what principals really do, since so much of it is done behind a closed door or away from the campus. But mistakes or failings get top billing in the teachers' room and elsewhere, while successes and strengths are often taken for granted. Apart from any monetary advantages that accrue to administrators, their main satisfaction comes from being able to do something special with an entire school. And making a difference in a school means gaining the agreement of staff to do things they may not have been asked to do previously.

The trick of good administration is to take the authority that comes with the role, pass much of it on to others, and not lose any in the process! It's a bit like the magician who pulls a rabbit out of a hat, serves it up as hasenpfeffer, and then pulls another from the hat.

Studies of effective schools and programs show that strong leadership is present there, especially in instructional areas, but that teachers are also encouraged to make decisions that affect their work. Strong leadership and empowered teachers seem to go together, but traditional hierarchical roles have to be adjusted to make such arrangements work. This always starts with administration. No matter how good teachers are, they can't turn authoritarian administrators into collegial partners—but good administrators, over time, can turn disempowered staffs into collegial partners. There are advantages to having ascribed power.

This chapter will touch on the main issues administrators need to consider, without becoming a general treatise on effective administrative practices. Building the Sense in Power of the staff can create the context for building the Sense of Power in children throughout the school.

Inspiring Teachers to Aspire

The first task in changing a school into one that empowers children to be responsible for their own learning is to inspire the teaching staff to aspire. The administrator must take the lead in helping the staff envision what such a school would be like and help them identify the strengths they have to make it happen. There are several ways an administrator can initiate this process:

- Identify teachers who empower children and acknowledge their efforts. Share with them the vision of a school that empowers children. They will become avid supporters and natural allies.

- Circulate articles and provide examples of programs and schools that empower staff and children, and discuss the ideas in staff meetings. Offer to set up study groups for any teachers who wish to explore such ideas.
- Identify classes or training opportunities instrumental to this goal and publicize them. Help teachers attend these programs.
- Emphasize what the school could become, not what it lacks. In a disempowering school, there are always complaints and negative attitudes. The administrator must initiate a positive, optimistic view, even when it seems impossible.
- Maintain active involvement with professional associations, especially those for administrators. Networking with other administrators will help you identify positive programs in other schools. They can become templates for the teachers at your own school.
- Emphasize goals and the processes for arriving at them. There are three basic questions to keep before the staff: "What are we trying to do here?" "What do we need in order to do a better job?" "How can we tell how well we're doing?" As a school progresses, these questions will always result in new answers and emerging processes at every stage of development.

Evaluations That Measure Goals

In a school that aspires to empower children, teachers must hold themselves to high standards as a group and believe they are capable of improving their performance. In such a school, the goal of evaluation is for teachers to engage in self-evaluation in the interests of improving their own performance. Evaluation of every kind becomes important because it is necessary to identify how far individual teachers and the school as a whole have moved toward the goals. In schools that disempower teachers, evaluation becomes a threat rather than an opportunity; everyone attempts to undermine the process, however subtly this may be done.

Formal performance appraisals are only one aspect of evaluation, not always the most important one since they are so often done poorly. A more important, informal process is needed in schools wanting to empower teachers. It starts, as so many empowering processes do, with a question: "What is it that you need in order to do a better job, one that comes closer to your own aspirations as a teacher?" It's interesting to see how hard it is for some teachers to answer this question. Teachers who feel disempowered will identify resources that are not available or programs impossible to implement: "Take all the hard-to-reach children in my class and put them somewhere else!" Good evidence of a growing empowerment would be increasing concreteness and practicality in teachers' answers to this question.

A follow-up question will further the process of empowerment: "Of all the things you need in order to do a better job, which of them are we most likely to be able to provide from our collective, current resources?" Presenting teachers with this question provides them with something concrete. It emphasizes the power of the group to influence performance and support the efforts of the individual teacher.

There are other things an administrator can do to promote teachers' self-evaluation:

- Meet with every teacher, informally, once a month. The goal of such meetings—to be emphasized at every opportunity—is to uncover what can be done to help each teacher do a better job. These meetings present the administrator as a resource rather than a threat. They provide an opportunity to acknowledge teachers' successes and their movement toward positive goals and enable you to work with weak teachers without stigmatizing them.

- Visit classrooms frequently. This is not for the purpose of formal evaluation but to maintain contact with children and teachers. Do not give teachers feedback from such visits, even if it is positive, because those with low Power will believe they are being judged, even if they aren't. Both positive and negative teaching practices will be observed, and these can be noted for later discussions as appropriate.
- Encourage support networks within the school. They can be formal, such as grade-level meetings, or informal, such as roundtable discussions of current literature. When teachers talk to each other, they are more likely to become reflective about their own practices and gradually develop a self-evaluating attitude.
- Do formal evaluations with close attention to district rules and procedures as well as to teacher contract standards. Following such procedures closely, even though they may be flawed, creates a climate for attention to the process.
- From time to time, at staff meetings, ask teachers to describe their most successful practices to the rest of the staff. This reduces the sense of isolation felt by classroom teachers and lessens the traditional insulation from each other's scrutiny that is an impediment to useful evaluation.

Many good ideas about formal performance appraisal practices are currently being discussed in educational circles. These range from peer-evaluation procedures to self-evaluation practices. But in schools that focus on enhancing the Sense of Power, there is no substitute for a climate in which teachers ask themselves daily, "What am I trying to do? What do I need in order to do it? What do I wish to do better?" Only when teachers are asking these questions of themselves can they sincerely suggest that children do the same.

Discipline

A sense of things being out of control quickly undermines teachers' confidence that they can teach children effectively. Administrators are looked to by both teaching and nonteaching staff as the main instrument for ensuring proper discipline in a school. Teachers need to feel that things are under control.

But this is an illusion, of course. No one person, even the administrator, can ensure that children will be controlled. Actually, everyone participates in maintaining effective discipline, even the children themselves. It is important to maintain the illusion of control "at the top," however, because both staff and students feel safer when this is the case.

As pointed out earlier, discipline and empowerment are closely related. This is an area where delegating authority and responsibility always pays off, even though the site administrator has to be ready to handle discipline matters when no one else can. Behavior that results in suspension or dismissal, and chronic misbehavior resulting from factors beyond the teacher's control, demand administrative involvement. The style in which these issues are handled must be perceived as proactive, consistent, fair and compassionate—a tall order for anyone.

School is a safe place when authority is exercised evenhandedly, rules are clear and consistently applied, academic tasks are demanding and involving, children can count on not being victimized by their peers, and parents and teachers are in accord about behavior. The site administrator has a hand in bringing about all of these things.

Without providing a blueprint for discipline, the following suggestions form a firm basis for administrative involvement in discipline procedures:

- Be present as much as possible. Be seen in classrooms, on the playground, during recesses, before and after school. Children and teachers should be able to count on an administrator being around and watchful. It is surprising how little time it actually takes to create the impression that you're everywhere, all the time.
- Keep tabs on special problems. Stay in close contact with teachers who have problem children in their classes. Stay in touch with children who have behavior-control problems. Talk to them. Find out how they're doing. Discipline deteriorates for all when a small number of problem kids are out of control.
- Set up a Discipline Task Force of teaching and nonteaching staff. Include parents when appropriate. Have this group continually monitoring the overall climate of discipline in the school. Have the task force identify problems and propose solutions. Have them meet when things are going well to identify what's working, and why.
- Bring to the staff's attention the extensive research findings on discipline. Let them know the relationships among academic emphasis, instructional strategies, parent involvement, teacher investment and children's behavior.
- Emphasize the criteria for positive behavior—the "shoulds"—whenever possible. Avoid methods for eradi-

cating misbehavior—the "shan'ts"—since they tend to be punitive and ultimately counterproductive. Since behavioral control is a group process, find ways to acknowledge positive group performance. Recognize children's contribution to a positive discipline climate.

- Create a climate of mutual support. The need for control varies in every teaching staff. Some need overt controls; others have a talent for working things out informally between themselves and the children. Differing needs for control may be responsible for staff conflicts that contribute to a deteriorating discipline climate. The only "perfect" discipline system is one in which individual children exercise self-control according to agreed standards. Anything else is less than perfect! Compromise is required.
- Don't be wishy-washy. Staff and children need someone to make hard decisions when they can't or won't. Do so quickly and with a stated willingness to change a decision if more information is brought to your attention. Don't let kids get away with misbehavior. Be a model of rigorous but compassionate attention to high standards in what is expected from children and demanded of yourself.

Collegiality

The word *collegiality* is bandied about quite a bit these days. It derives from the same root as *colleague,* the original meaning being "to bind together." There are two senses in which the word is used: one signifies the social and interpersonal processes that exist within a group; the other is directed at the technical and professional development processes within a group. The importance of this distinction is that social collegiality is directed toward making people feel comfortable, safe and secure, while professional collegiality is concerned with development, change and risk taking. The two are not mutually exclusive, but the processes for developing each are somewhat different.

Developing a climate for professional collegiality means creating arenas in which staff members come together to focus on the work. Having an atmosphere of collegiality between administration and teachers means that both interact in those arenas. The arenas are fundamentally concerned with professional development, i.e., building skills and attitudes that result in people doing a better job. When professional collegiality is vigorous and pertinent, social collegiality usually follows.

This kind of collegial climate within a school is only possible when most of the staff aspire to something more, embodied in goals, visions, objectives and problem solving that require them to have enhanced skills. People come together and support each other in finding better ways to move toward the goals. Since teachers may need strengthening in different areas, it is always best to have many different collegial arenas operating simultaneously. Administrators must be active along with teachers.

The many possible arenas include the following:

- Grade-level meetings
- Various combinations of cross-grade committees for a variety of purposes associated with creating developmental curricula
- Reading roundtable groups that discuss professional literature
- Curriculum task forces and committees
- Textbook selection committees

- Support groups for new teachers, teachers new to the school or teachers teaching a new grade level
- Mentor relationships in which experienced teachers are "buddies" of new teachers
- Administrative advisory groups that work closely with the principal on school policies
- Districtwide committees and councils that deal with issues affecting all the schools
- Special groups for training teacher aides, volunteers and tutors

Collegiality is the process by which different levels within the school—administrators, teachers, and nonteaching personnel—are "bound together" with a sense of common purpose. Professional collegiality is not something that occurs automatically, because it always presupposes a gap between what should be done and what is being done. Many teachers and administrators don't wish to shine a light on that! But in the most effective schools, teachers and administrators are avid in their search for better ways to reach more children.

When teachers are engaged in their own professional development, in a climate of mutual support and influence, good things happen to children—if for no other reason than a teacher wanting to try something new, different or unusual, just to see what happens.

In a collegial climate, not everyone is required to work on the same thing at the same time, even though the school may be moving toward agreed-upon goals. People need to work on things they're interested in and which they identify as areas in which they wish to develop professionally. An administrator seeking to empower staff will give them many opportunities to do so, and encourage them to participate.

- Teachers support one another's attempts at new practices and freely share their most workable ideas.
- There is a persistent interest in results, primarily in measuring the development of skills and attitudes in children. Evaluation and assessment, in many forms, are of major interest to teachers and administrators.

The work of teachers is to teach children. A teacher's skill is defined by the ability to teach a wide variety of children effectively. In order to do this, teachers must have a wide array of flexible tactics that allow them to adjust what they teach and how they teach it to the different needs and learning styles of children. The more skills a teacher has, the more effective he or she is likely to be. The more effective a teacher is, the more she or he will feel a high sense of efficacy, i.e., the more empowered and in control she or he will feel.

The main pathway to empowering teachers in their jobs is to broaden and deepen their instructional skills. The main attribute of an administrator who can do this is commitment to instructional leadership.

Programs That Empower Children

Even though the most important relationships in a school are those between teachers and children in the classroom, the administrator has a key role to play in empowering children. This role is manifested through support of certain activities that no single teacher is responsible for.

Involving children in noninstructional activities provides an arena for many of them to demonstrate skills that are not primarily academic. Such opportunities support increases in self-esteem that can enhance effort and commitment in the classroom.

Pay Attention to the Curriculum

Instructional leadership is another easy-to-say catchphrase that means different things to different people. For our purposes, instructional leadership means persistently directing the attention of the teaching staff to reviewing what is being taught and how it is being taught.

This does not require administrators to be master teachers or curriculum experts, although it doesn't hurt if they are. The paradox is that the skills and attitudes that incline one to be a master teacher aren't always the same as those that result in being a master administrator. Good teaching and good administration are both required for a school to be good.

Directing attention to what is being taught and how it's being taught signifies that instruction is a very high priority for the administrator. Instruction should be at the center of what the staff talk about. When an administrator is an "instructional leader," the school is characterized by many of the following features:

- Staff meeting time is devoted to reviewing tactics and strategies in instructional areas.
- Staff training activities primarily address instruction—how the curriculum will be designed and delivered.
- The administrator is proactive in finding ways to make professional development opportunities available to staff.
- Through an active committee structure, teachers are centrally involved in decision making about curriculum and instruction.
- There are many opportunities for the exchange and enhancement of ideas and practices through collegial activities.

For a school to provide rich experiences for children, lots of things need to happen that individual teachers cannot easily do. When a group of teachers work together to create a program, they need administrative support. They may need space, time, substitutes, special material resources, advice or direction. The administrator needs to be involved.

The administrator may also directly promote many activities that empower children. These include the following:

- Cross-grade tutoring programs
- Hall monitors, crossing guards, and other roles for older students that require organization and training
- Student councils that become arenas for children to begin to learn about democratic processes
- Community volunteer programs in which groups or whole classes provide assistance to seniors or handicapped persons or clean up the local park
- Leadership training and peer counseling programs, especially at middle school level, which often involve several schools working together
- Entrance and competition in local, regional, state and national contests—in both sports and academic areas
- Assemblies, awards and recognition programs, and performances by children
- Clubs, sports, extracurricular and after-school activities

All of these can be important arenas for empowerment for many children. They often require administrative outreach, support and encouragement, even though they may be staffed by teachers.

Through their support of these activities, administrators promote a climate of empowerment in their schools. These activities are not alternatives to academic performance, although they may serve that function for some children; they are opportunities for self-expression that allow children to experience efficacy in a variety of ways. The more opportunities children have to demonstrate their Sense of Power to themselves and others, the more likely they will perform at a higher level academically.

When the range of choices is extended, children can learn to make important decisions through selecting from an array of noncurricular options. The more choices children can make successfully without fear of failure, punishment or prohibitions, the more their Sense of Power rises. As the administrator, your main contribution to empowering children is to promote and make available this wider range of options.

These are the main strategies by which administrators empower their schools. Of course there are many other things to do, such as goal setting, conflict resolution, providing resources, training—the whole range of administrative functions both within and outside the school.

But the strategies that empower the school are those that most enhance the Sense of Power in children and adults. In this, the main approaches can be reduced to a few basic principles:

- Increase the choices available that relate to teachers' and children's most important tasks.
- Focus attention on developing critical skills. For teachers, these are instructional tactics; for children, they are basic academic skills.
- Delegate authority and responsibility downward to its most effective level.
- Emphasize support systems for teachers and children that increase their chances of individual success.

Programs That Empower Parents

Influencing the way families affect children's school performance is part of the overall strategy for enhancing the learning climate for children. There are several general principles that underlie good practice in this area:

- Schools must be "permeable" to parents; there must be easier access to the school's activities and resources. This accessibility should stimulate feelings of affiliation and ownership, a "my school" attitude.
- Schools must stand for something clear and consistent so that parents get a simple and persistent message about what's expected of them.
- The school must be proactive in reaching out to parents, especially when parents are not inclined to become involved.
- The school must have a variety of resources available to parents to help them manage family life more effectively.
- Schools must persistently communicate the idea that as partners in education parents can help their children be successful in school. The schools are not social agencies who can improve family life overall; they can only try to maximize this narrow objective.
- Schools must work to raise parents' expectations of their children so that the expectations within which children live can support school success.

Children who are having difficulty in school frequently come from families that are having difficulty. At-risk children become that way because of family dysfunction. Families who are poor, undereducated, language-deficient, unemployed, and in which the parent or parents cannot provide proper supervision and nurturing are likely to produce children with low Power and minimal expectations of school success.

While the schools cannot solve all of such families' problems, they can influence the expectations that parents have of their children's potential for success. As parents' faith and optimism in their children grows, the children's expectations for themselves can rise—and their aspirations will rise as well.

There are many things the school can do to empower parents. The following list offers some ideas:

- Maximize the administrative infrastructures for communicating with parents, e.g., up-to-date databases of addresses and phone numbers, mailing strategies, duplication methods, etc.
- As much as possible, have the school provide facilities for community meetings, classes and other gatherings so that parents can use the school in different ways.
- Support a variety of parent involvement groups—PTA, home/school clubs, site committees, advisory groups, for example—going beyond those mandated by law. Support classroom clubs and fund-raising groups and encourage parent involvement.
- Identify parents who are most likely to support the school, and keep closely in touch with them. These parents are most likely to fill roles in school organizations and volunteer for activities.
- Organize schoolwide volunteer groups and if necessary train parents in effective volunteer practices. Have a volunteer handbook and a volunteer organization that includes noncertificated personnel such as classroom aides.
- Sponsor parent education programs in all aspects of family life relevant to the parent community, e.g., child

management, raising self-esteem, helping children with homework, children's literature, setting rules and limits.

- Have an open-door policy for parents and publicize the principal's office hours in all communications.
- Have a regular school newsletter. Do spot phone checks to see whether children are bringing them home. If not, find resources to mail them.
- Have a parent handbook that describes the school's goals and methods, discipline procedures, how to handle grievances with teachers, expectations of children and parents, and other informational and motivational material. Be sure that all parents have a copy. Refer to it in the newsletter regularly; offer parents new copies if needed.
- Call parents randomly from time to time to assess their perceptions and attitudes about the school. As word spreads among the parents of this practice, they will know how much the school is interested in their opinions.
- Emphasize the importance of positive parent/school relations. With all school personnel, emphasize that whenever parents show up on campus they should be treated with friendliness and respect.
- Support adult education efforts through the school, especially where there are large undereducated, immigrant or transient populations.
- Sponsor a variety of "back-to-school night" events during the year—all-school, grade-level, primary/intermediate grade levels. Schedule a variety of times, to include parents who work.
- Provide childcare at all group gatherings so that parents with small children can attend. Even if parents have to pay a small fee, more will show up.

- Provide food, even if it's potluck, at all general gatherings of parents. It makes the school seem more welcoming and convivial. Always offer parents coffee or soft drinks when they show up at school.
- Make the school an information center for family support in the areas of mental health, medicine, abuse, social services, criminal justice, etc. School personnel should be able to direct parents who request help to the proper sources. Train staff to do so and have information available.
- Set up an ongoing system of needs assessment with staff and parents. This could be committees or periodic task forces who look at children's needs and how the school can meet those needs. Involve as many parents as possible in the effort.

No school can do all of these things, but the more that are done, the more likely it is that parents will feel empowered to help their children be successful.

Chapter

9

To the School Board: Building Aspiration in Your District

For a school district to make a difference in children's lives, the school board has to believe it can make a difference. This is not always as easy at it sounds. While the authority of the local school board* varies from state to state, there are always limitations on its power. State and federal laws and rules, employee contracts, voter resistance to taxes, complacency, local politics, budget limitations—a raft of factors make it hard for a school board to influence children's experiences in school.

Along with administrators and teachers, school boards can often feel powerless in the face of the challenges facing our schools. Worse, boards may try to maintain an illusion of control by exercising authority in areas where they have no responsibility, as when they make decisions that don't—or can't—work. The powerlessness that results is the reciprocal of that felt by teachers and children, who may have responsibility without authority.

---

* The term school board will be used while recognizing that such bodies may have different titles in various parts of the country. The author has been a school board member for twelve years.

Individual board members have agendas that reflect both their personal beliefs and the mandate they believe the voters have given them. Sometimes these are the same, often they're different. But the individual member is powerless without the support of a board majority. In larger districts, it takes a long time to see the results of important decisions. In smaller districts, unanticipated emergencies often distract from moving toward long-range goals. Even in the smallest districts, the weight of regulation and accountability make district management a complex task.

Most board members are not professional educators, which is an American tradition. As a result, they are often held hostage to the esoteric practices and jargon of professionals. The learning curve for new board members is a long one, even for those who bring relevant skills from other fields.

Boards are often torn between the demands of parents for quick and easy solutions to their personal problems—"My children can't get to school without busing"—and the recommendations of the staff—"Either cut busing or cut programs." Few major decisions are made without disturbing someone. Few boards receive praise or recognition for doing their job well. A school board often gets lost in the battle between professional educators and state and federal policy makers. What's a sincere board member to do?

The Empowerment Dilemma

Because of the electoral mandate given the school board, it has the ultimate authority for managerial and educational policies in the district. Even though much of its policy making is pro forma in that it carries out legal and financial requirements, the board is nevertheless seen by the community and its own staff members as the group to be cultivated and persuaded in order to get significant things done.

This results in a dilemma in regard to empowerment. If a board sees empowering staff and children as important, then it must delegate some of its authority to administrative staff, and through them to the teachers. But in most instances the board can't do this because of its legal standing. Therefore, it can only empower staff by enabling them to influence the decisions the board makes. In other words, the board can't give away its power; it can only allow the staff, parents and community to influence how that power is used.

This becomes significant when the district is facing controversial issues. Most recently these center on the tough decisions associated with having only marginally sufficient funding for programs and facilities. A board must tread a fine line between imposing its own collective ideology and being captive to special interest groups within the staff or community.

The processes by which the board allows itself to be influenced by those whom its decisions affect is a model for how other segments of the district function. How the board relates to the superintendent affects the superintendent's relationship with other administrators, and their relationship to their schools. Much of the board's influence is symbolic; people perceive how it functions and judge its values and beliefs accordingly.

What follows is not a full treatment of how boards of education should function. Certain practices are described that have the most effect on *processes of empowerment* within a district. The goal of starting empowerment processes at the board level is to maximize the likelihood that the children of the district will be empowered. Children's empowerment is the goal, so that they can safely take risks and accept challenges in their own education.

Empowering Top Administrators

The board's relationship to the superintendent and other top administrators is its first line in distributing authority. In hiring its top administrator, the board is not only picking someone to whom it entrusts major decisions. How that person goes about making decisions and presenting the board with decisions to make is a critical factor in determining district morale.

The board should look for evidence of administrators' commitment to collegiality, ability to delegate authority and responsibility, and capacity for building and maintaining effective professional relationships. The district's top administrator will limit the process of empowerment if she or he doesn't have strengths in these areas. It is the board's job to investigate these areas in the hiring process and to make known their intention to have the top administrators transmit assigned authority down the line to teachers in the classroom—but to do so within a context of accountability.

Since the board is not usually privy to the day-to-day relationships within the administrative cadre, and shouldn't count on gossip and innuendo for such information, the main venue for assessment is the board meeting and its delegated committees. Are the administrators (even down to the site level in larger districts) involved in shaping policy recommendations? Do administrators have the opportunity to speak at board meetings to represent personal points of view? Does the superintendent encourage administrators to give reports and make themselves known to the board?

Are site-level administrators appointed to the districtwide committees and task forces that make recommendations to the board? Are the relationships and communication between administrative levels convivial, collegial and professional? Do board and superintendent have a secure enough relationship so that one can ask a site administrator's opinion at a board meeting?

The board further empowers its top administrators (in small districts, site administrators are part of the "top") by the policies it approves regarding administrative training and professional development. Despite hard financial times, does the board have a commitment to such professional development? Do administrative compensation packages include stipends for workshops, seminars and conferences?

Assessment and evaluation are important features in the process of empowering teachers and children. Does the board set an example by having a clear and consistent method for evaluating the superintendent? Is the superintendent expected to perform professional appraisals of administrators? By having such appraisal methods start at the top, the board empowers everyone down the line to institute good assessment procedures. No one is exempt—does the board periodically review its own performance, either formally or informally?

A school board encourages an empowering ethic within the district in the way it deals with its top administrators. An empowering board will do the following:

- Hire top staff who perform their jobs by delegating authority and responsibility to lower levels of the organization.
- Value input from all administrators when making decisions.
- Support training and development for administrators.
- Emphasize the importance of good performance appraisals.

Balancing the Decision-Making Process

Not only the decisions it makes, but the *way* the board makes decisions are evidence of its own empowerment. Some boards tend to rubber-stamp all recommendations of the administration, on the assumption that high-paid professionals should know what they're doing. Other boards go deeply into administrative decision making, stepping outside their roles as policy makers and usurping the power of administrators to take action. The middle ground between these two extremes can seem like a shifting island in a fast-flowing river.

The board is dependent on administrators to provide information with which to make decisions. The quality of decisions is determined by the breadth and the timeliness of that information. Since the major task of the board is to make decisions, there are a number of issues to be considered:

- The board should require a high standard of documentation before it makes a decision based on administrative recommendation. Board members should see all relevant and appropriate documents. They should have prior notice of decisions, i.e., a discussion item at one meeting is voted on at the next one. They should not make any decision based on verbal recommendation, except in the most minor matters. They should ensure that all decisions are fully documented in the board minutes.
- The board should have enough time to make a good decision. Decisions made under the gun often need to be redone; rushed decisions are often a sign that someone didn't do his or her homework in a timely manner. It's best if decisions can be made at meetings following a previous discussion meeting. In some places "open-meeting laws" require this. There is always someone who

would like the decision made quickly, including some members of the board. If the board can invoke a rule to keep itself from rushing, better decisions are likely to be made.

- Anyone who may be affected by a decision should have the opportunity to comment on it during discussion. It is important to publish agendas and hold meetings in a timely manner so that people know when they should attend. Administrators should be encouraged to invite relevant parties to board meetings when issues they're concerned with are being discussed. Opening up discussion to the floor can be done effectively if there are clear rules from the chair. This is one of the key methods for empowering people—if the board has a tradition of open discussion both staff and public have more confidence in being able to influence the decisions.
- All board members are responsible for doing their homework. When they don't, staff and public lose confidence in the process, and the board either "goes off half-cocked" or does what administration wishes without adequate review. And for the board to do its homework, it must get the information it needs in a timely way. Each member must have access to the superintendent for help in analyzing the information between board meetings. Preprinted agendas and documentation are an absolute necessity for this to happen, even in the smallest districts.

The following list summarizes principles of decision making at the board level. By consistently requiring that these principles be honored, the board makes a statement about effective decision making throughout the district.

- Set a high standard of reporting information before decisions are made.
- Schedule enough time to make good decisions. The more controversial a decision is, the more time needed to make it.
- Decision making should be an open process; those who will be affected by a decision must have the opportunity to provide input.
- Board members should be "experts" in the decisions they make. They must do their homework and make informed contributions to those decisions.

The Ethic of Inclusion

School boards can't give away their authority. But they can engage others in the process of using that authority through including people in the major decision making for district directions and policies. This means that the board designs and implements a network involving the staff and parent community.

Starting at the board level, this ethic of inclusion can become an active principle that is made apparent through the way the board arranges things:

- Be generous in creating task forces, committees and study groups on long-range planning matters for the district. Include parents, teachers, nonteaching personnel and administrators in studying and making recommendations to the board.
- If the board has a system of standing committees, review their functioning to include non-board members as active participants. Confidential areas such as personnel or salary negotiations may need to be exempted from this.

- Encourage and support school and district groups that include personnel of various levels and functions—curriculum committees, child study teams, administrative teams, staff development systems. Support for such groups sends a strong message to teachers and others about the board's recognition of their professional competence.
- Empower parent groups by seeking their opinions on important matters. Recognize parent volunteers in appropriate ways. Have administrators report on the activities of parents in their schools. Have parents on districtwide committees.
- Let parents and the public know what is happening. Print reports of board meeting actions in school newsletters. Try to include reports of board meetings in local newspapers. Publish a periodic report of board activities for parents. These and similar activities create a climate of openness to the public.
- Indicate clear, liberal policies for inviting public input at board meetings. These should be spelled out so that boundaries are set during times of crisis and confrontation and open discussion is allowed during friendly times.

The principle of inclusion should be discussed from time to time. It may seem paradoxical to involve the public in decisions they elected the school board to make. Therefore, the goal is *not* that the board delegate authority and responsibility, but that by including more people in its decisions, the board make richer and higher quality ones. By involving more people in decision making, the acceptability of decisions made will be greater. The board has a major responsibility to keep controversy and dysfunctional political pressures to a minimum. It can do this by garnering public and staff respect for the way it goes about including people in district processes.

Procedures and opportunities must be set up so that individuals or groups don't feel they have to batter down walls of privilege set up by the board before they can be heard. In this way, the board empowers parents, staff members, teachers and nonteaching personnel by making it possible for them to influence district operations.

Appendix A

Personal Arena Behavior Checklists

The following checklists will help you identify and understand behavior associated with each condition of self-esteem. You can use the checklists to help you determine which condition is a child's critical condition. The larger the number of index behaviors observed, and the greater the frequency or intensity of the behaviors, the greater the difficulty the child has with that particular condition.

Power

- ☐ Avoids taking responsibility. Will not initiate needed projects on own and will have to be reminded about required duties.
- ☐ Shies away from challenging tasks and won't take risks in areas where judgments may be made about success or failure.
- ☐ Has limited skills in many areas and does not actively pursue improving skills.
- ☐ Has poor control over body. Is often awkward or physically inept at common tasks, although may have prowess in some sports.
- ☐ Frequently acts helpless and gives up on tasks, even simple ones, when obstacles, even minor ones, occur.
- ☐ Avoids being in charge of others.
- ☐ Lacks emotional self-control. Anger, fear, hysteria, inability to deal with frustrations, crying and depression occur easily, often in combination with each other.
- ☐ Always wants to be the leader or have own way, but will do so in a way leading to failure or conflict. Will lead in such a way that others must take responsibility in order to avoid failure.
- ☐ Shows resistance to directives through foot-dragging, avoidance and denial.
- ☐ Avoids stating needs and interests assertively and often goes along with others, especially when they have strong opinions or ideas.
- ☐ Is often stubborn and resistant in situations in which no threat or possibility of failure is imminent.
- ☐ Blames others for things that are obviously not their responsibility whenever failure or problems occur.

Connectiveness

- ☐ Is easily distracted and spends much time watching others in many different settings.
- ☐ When allowed to choose seating will elect to sit near doors, walls or at the periphery of the group.
- ☐ Wears excessive clothing, relative to the activity or the temperature. Doesn't like to remove hat, jacket or other outdoor apparel when indoors.
- ☐ Does not communicate easily and is unable to listen to others and understand their viewpoint.
- ☐ Is shy, has few or no friends, and actively avoids social situations. Is unaware of others' interests or needs.
- ☐ Talks negatively about family or ethnic group.
- ☐ Seldom, if ever, volunteers to help others.
- ☐ Is disliked by peers.
- ☐ Acts uncomfortable around adults, or else constantly seeks their attention.
- ☐ Always wants to be in the center of things, and/or constantly tries to be noticed.
- ☐ More often relates to things or animals rather than people. Carries a lot of "stuff" around in pockets and bags, and values it excessively. Spends a lot of time with pets, takes them to bed and so on.
- ☐ Has trouble stating ideas and feelings directly and asking for needs.
- ☐ Is uncomfortable about touching others or being touched.
- ☐ Makes others uncomfortable when touching them. Doesn't have the "appropriate touch" in many situations.

Uniqueness

☐ Seems to be in reverie frequently. Stares abstractedly at walls or ceilings while not paying attention.

☐ Seems to talk to self or make noticeable noises.

☐ Speaks negatively about self and accomplishments frequently.

☐ Takes little or no pride in appearance.

☐ Shows little imagination. Rarely comes up with original ideas, but they are quite unusual if and when they do appear.

☐ Demonstrates little regard for own ideas, interests or abilities. Rarely expresses an opinion or feeling different from what others have expressed.

☐ Does things as told, rarely improvises.

☐ Is uncomfortable when called on or singled out.

☐ Seeks praise and recognition often, but becomes embarrassed, denies or disregards recognition when it is given.

☐ Shows off when it is inappropriate.

☐ Usually conforms to others' wishes or ideas, particularly peers'. Is a follower, and rarely, if ever, a leader.

☐ Interacts with others in an awkward and mechanical way, categorizing people in simplistic terms and being critical of their personal characteristics. Tries to find ways to be like others rather than accept differences.

☐ Rarely, if ever, takes delight in personal accomplishments, even if the accomplishment results in praise or recognition from others.

Models

☐ Gets confused easily and wastes time with apparently aimless activity.

☐ Becomes obsessively involved with activities that are unrelated to the task at hand.

☐ Is poorly organized in both thinking and behavior.

☐ Is confused easily about what is right and wrong.

☐ Has a difficult time deciding what to do or say, even in situations that should be quite familiar.

☐ Responds to instruction and directions in a resistant manner that is always associated with confusion or ambivalence.

☐ Is unsure about methods and purposes that are associated with an activity.

☐ Will continually seek directions or insist there is only one way to do something, persisting obsessively in doing it that way, despite failure.

☐ Has rigid standards and tends to get upset easily when others don't conform to those standards.

☐ Avoids or acts awkwardly in social situations requiring some formal etiquette.

☐ Doesn't respond well to instruction and expects not to know what is going on.

Appendix B

Interpersonal Arena Techniques for Building Self-Esteem

There are a number of strategies you can use in the Interpersonal Arena to build each of the four conditions in children. The following lists offer some suggestions.

Techniques to Build Power

- Encourage personal responsibility by asking questions more often than you make statements. Show how children's choices have produced the results they obtained.
- Help children understand how their own decision-making processes work.
- Help children evaluate their own problem-solving processes and teach them ways to solve problems effectively.
- Affirm success, even though children indicate that they feel they have failed. Show which parts of an activity were successful and which parts weren't.
- Acknowledge and show respect for children's current level of competence in any area, as well as showing how to increase competence.

- Encourage children to set *short-range* objectives and show them how to develop a short-range plan for accomplishing them successfully. Fight the notion that things are out of control.
- Acknowledge that the children have had a positive effect on others when it is appropriate, and seek evidence that this has occurred.
- Provide lots of alternatives when asking children to make choices, but make sure the limits of the available alternatives are clear.
- Hold children accountable for events that are truly under their control or influence, even if they seem to indicate they were controlled by other forces or events.
- Help children set limits, especially in regard to what they will not do to others and not let others do to them; and show them how to honor and maintain those limits. Acknowledge the difficulty of setting and keeping to the limits and disciplines one sets up for oneself.

Techniques to Build Connectiveness

- Show affection directly, often through brief, undemanding physical contact (e.g., patting shoulders, touching hands).
- Show approval when behavior justifies it, even though the children have previously done something to elicit criticism.
- Be public with praise, saying positive things about the children or their performance so others can hear, but don't require them to become the center of attention if they show discomfort.

- Let children know when they have contributed to the overall progress of the group or class. Make such comments public and let others know about the contribution.
- Share your own feelings, even though the children may disparage or criticize them.
- Share your interests, hobbies and activities, even though the children may not indicate interest.
- Show approval in some way when you notice the children have related well to others.
- Listen non-judgmentally as much as possible. Do not feel everything children say needs to be commented on, agreed or disagreed with, criticized or praised.
- Respect children's relationships with friends and provide opportunities for friends to work together as well as encouraging new relationships.
- Spend time alone with children when other classmates are not present.
- Find ways to do something special with children that satisfies their particular interests or needs.
- Use indirect methods of communicating, such as leaving notes in books or special personal comments on returned assignments.
- Respect children's need to have object relations when interpersonal ones are troubling, so that children will not be prematurely sanctioned for playing with something while trying to work.

Techniques to Build Uniqueness

- Notice and affirm special characteristics and talents, even though they may be unusual or not to your taste.
- Encourage children to express their own ideas, even though they are different from your own.
- Provide alternative ways for children to express feelings; writing if it's easier than speaking, drawing if it's easier than writing, and so on.
- Communicate acceptance, even when you must limit children's behavior.
- Identify the positive aspects of unusual ideas or behavior and compliment them, rather than criticizing the negative aspects.
- Respect children's privacy, especially their desks, space and possessions.
- Allow children to perform duties and responsibilities in their own way, as much as possible.
- Find out what children think is special about themselves and provide opportunities for expressing their specialness.
- Help children find the resources and opportunities for exploring special interests.
- Avoid using ridicule and shame, even if there is a need to limit or stop a child's behavior.
- Try to understand the special circumstances of family or background influencing children's behavior and let the children know that you understand.
- Help children find effective ways to express themselves so as to help themselves and others.

Techniques to Build Models

- You are the primary model for children in your classroom, and your behavior, in general, has an impact on them. The more consistently, fairly and ethically you can behave, with conscious attention to the values and beliefs that underlie your actions, the more the children will be helped.
- Help children understand what they believe by giving them an opportunity to express their beliefs in contexts where they will not feel challenged or criticized.
- Help children set goals for their lives and learning, while recognizing that such goals may be short-lived. Help children accept the fact that goals change over time.
- Have children face the consequences of their actions, without trying to shield them from harm they may have caused others.
- Help children learn how to do the things they are required to do at a high level of excellence.
- Set, maintain and hold to very high standards in all things you do with children, while recognizing and accepting that they will not always be able to live up to them. Progress toward a high standard should be seen as a success.
- Emphasize strengths rather than handicaps or liabilities; stress the positive rather than negative; point out successes more quickly than failures.
- Share what you believe with children in appropriate and relevant ways, without requiring their adherence to your beliefs.
- Always clarify what, why, where, when and how when assigning a task or duty to children.

Appendix C

Group Arena Techniques For Building Self-Esteem

There are a number of strategies you can use in the Group Arena to build each of the four conditions in children. The following lists offer some suggestions. The techniques suggested are applicable both for classrooms and the school as a whole.

Techniques to Build Power

- Allow children to participate as much as possible in defining their learning goals, what is to be done and how.
- Give children as much choice as possible about when and how to do things. Maximize alternatives and always try to have at least two options in any activity.
- Have children act as teachers and tutors to each other and to younger people, especially in areas where they show competence. Help them find ways to share their skills.
- Involve children in setting rules for the classroom, group or school. Make such involvement meaningful by giving them the responsibility and resources to monitor the rules they set.

- Help children acquire better control over their feelings and physical bodies through movement, dance, sports and exercises.
- Pay special attention to interpersonal skills as a special skill area and develop learning activities to teach such skills.
- Help children develop a stronger sense of the relationship between work and benefits by creating "economies" that provide concrete rewards for successful performance. Mimic the real world as much as possible.
- Teach democratic decision-making processes, use them as much as possible, and help children acquire skills to work with and influence the groups in which they participate.
- Allow children to work at their level of competence as long as possible before requiring them to proceed. Knowing what one can do well is a more useful awareness than knowing what one still hasn't learned.
- Help children understand their own learning styles and teach them more effective ways to learn things.

Techniques to Build Connectiveness

- Create opportunities for children to share personal experiences with each other.
- Develop cooperative learning or group tasks which require children to work together in order to complete them successfully.
- Have class or group meetings in which problems are discussed and decisions made. Help children learn effective group and interpersonal skills that facilitate problem solving and decision making.

- Create activities in which the entire class or group can participate, such as projects, sports, plays and service activities.
- Develop alternative relationship opportunities, remembering that children connect to people, places and things. A "calming teddy bear" children can hold when feeling anxious, a "safe desk" children can sit at when feeling unsafe in relationship to others, and a "time-out" space or room children can visit when relations are becoming problematic are some possibilities.
- Emphasize service to others in the classroom or group and provide many opportunities for the group to engage in service activities in the school or community.
- Have occasions in which the focus is on the families or cultural and ethnic associations of the class or group. Provide opportunities for children to focus on their own heritage.
- Create opportunities for children to identify with the school or organization through activities that enhance such identification. Engage children in planning and carrying out such activities.
- Organize learning teams so associations around the work of the class or group become normal and natural.
- Increase the number of special events, parties and outings that the class or group is responsible for.
- De-emphasize individuality and autonomy while emphasizing cooperation and teamwork. Do not be put off or embarrassed by being disparaged. Recognize that avoiding being cooperative is more often a result of lack of skill in cooperative behavior than a rejection of it.
- Have clear and consistent relationship standards, with appropriate displays and reminders. Have positive standards—"Be Helpful to Others"—as well as negative ones—"No Fighting."

Techniques to Build Uniqueness

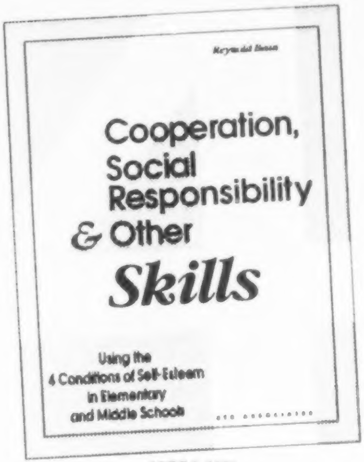
- Have opportunities for children to do projects where personal expression is not graded: art projects, books, scrapbooks, and so on.
- Design activities in which differences among people are emphasized, helping children understand how being different from each other is acceptable and desirable.
- Observe children in your classroom or group carefully in order to identify special attributes that they will not express directly to you.
- Develop activities in which children's special interests and needs can determine the use of materials and products: personal essays and stories, art projects and other self-selected activities.
- Have a variety of learning opportunities available in the classroom.
- Allow as much free time as possible where children can choose their own activities within clearly described limits.
- Create special roles within the classroom or group. Make sure each child has the opportunity to play different roles with respect to the group.
- Provide assignments requiring children to assess and clarify their personal values and beliefs and allow them the opportunity to compare theirs with others.
- Provide multiple rewards and opportunities for individual recognition so all children can achieve some special status.

Techniques to Build Models

- State rules, and consequences for breaking them, clearly and follow through consistently.
- Have clear standards for work and behavior and follow them consistently.
- Make options clear and state the variations that will be permitted within a framework.
- Do things to make work in the classroom or organization more enjoyable (e.g., play music, use humor) so children can associate work and learning with pleasant feelings.
- Keep the issue of personal values and standards of behavior constantly in front of children by showing how such factors apply to whatever they do.
- Expose children to adults who are worthy of their emulation, and who are able to relate their experiences to the children's. Help children learn how successful people accomplish their goals, through real life association, literature or film.
- Share your personal values and interests with children and invite them, as much as possible, to involve themselves in your interests in ways that are appropriate and relevant.
- Make use of tutors and assistants who are slightly older or more experienced than your children. Children can learn a lot from role models who are only slightly more advanced than they are.
- Encourage neatness and orderliness in your classroom or school and require children to live up to those standards.
- Increase the range of children's experiences through activities that take them out of the school and by bringing many alternatives into the classroom and school.

Don't Miss More Self-Esteem Titles From Reynold Bean!

Continue to enhance student and teacher esteem with these practical classroom guides. Full of concrete strategies!

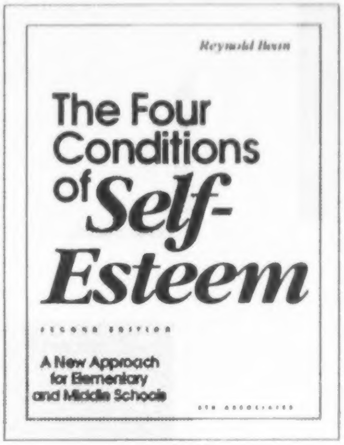


Reynold Bean

Cooperation, Social Responsibility & Other Skills

Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

(#556-H8)
176 pages/paper/$19.95



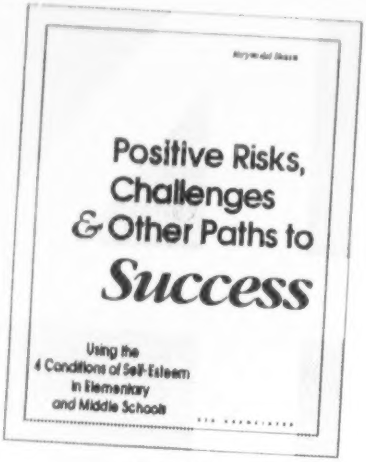
Reynold Bean

The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem

SECOND EDITION

A New Approach for Elementary and Middle Schools

(#596-H8)
217 pages/paper/$24.95

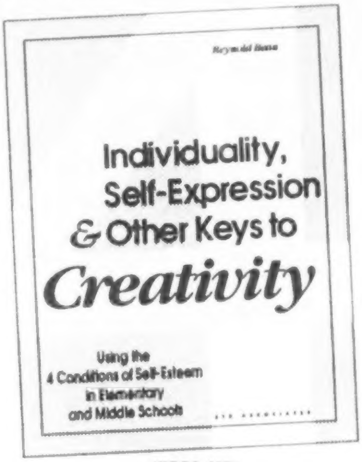


Reynold Bean

Positive Risks, Challenges & Other Paths to Success

Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

(#557-H8)
161 pages/paper/$19.95

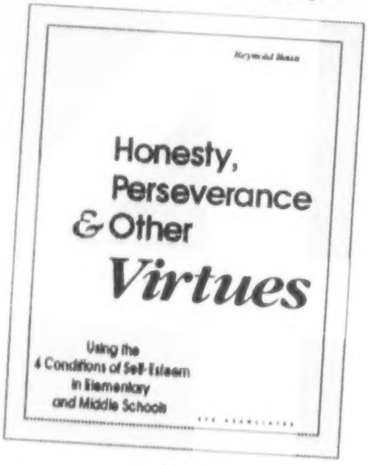


Reynold Bean

Individuality, Self-Expression & Other Keys to Creativity

Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

(#558-H8)
163 pages/paper/$19.95



Reynold Bean

Honesty, Perseverance & Other Virtues

Using the 4 Conditions of Self-Esteem in Elementary and Middle Schools

(#559-H8)
203 pages/paper/$19.95

These are just a few of the dynamic self-esteem books, curricula, pamphlets and videos available from ETR Associates. For more information and a complete catalog...

Call Toll-Free 1 (800) 321-4407

or contact:

Sales Department
ETR Associates
P.O. Box 1830
Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830
FAX: (408) 438-4284

What does self–esteem have to do with turning in homework?

Positive Risks, Challenges and Other Paths to Success explains how teachers can empower students to take risks and experience achievement by increasing their self-esteem. With this practical guide, "I can't" becomes "I'll try," as fear of failure is replaced by the desire to learn!

This timely book examines the ways in which schools traditionally disempower students. It offers concrete suggestions for overcoming these barriers and expanding elementary and middle school students' influence in the education process. Students with a sense of competence and control take responsibility for their learning and work harder to succeed.

You'll find eight simple strategies for building an empowering classroom environment plus many classroom-tested activities that enhance students' feelings of efficacy and responsibility. These strategies are easily applied across the curriculum to reinforce learning throughout the day.

Of course, children are best empowered by teachers who believe in their own talents and competence. Special chapters help teachers, administrators and school board members create an environment committed to the personal and professional growth of teachers, students and staff.

This book is one in a series by Reynold Bean showing how self-esteem principles can be used to achieve excellence in education. Other titles in this series for elementary and middle school educators include: *The Four Conditions of Self-Esteem; Cooperation, Social Responsibility and Other Skills; Honesty, Perseverance and Other Virtues;* and *Individuality, Self-Expression and Other Keys to Creativity.*

ETR Associates
Santa Cruz, California

$19.95